



**OUR  
CALLING**

**OUR  
BLESSING**

Discovering the plan  
God has for you

*By: Jim Curtis*

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"Demonstrate the goodness of Him"

1 Peter 2:9-10

J.B. Phillips New Testament (PHILLIPS)

But you are God's "chosen generation", his "royal priesthood", his "holy nation", his "peculiar people"—all the old titles of God's people now belong to you. It is for you now *to demonstrate the goodness of him* who has called you out of darkness into his amazing light. In the past you were not "a people" at all: now you are the people of God. In the past you had no experience of his mercy, but now it is intimately yours.

## Introduction

### Building a "Bridge"

The message of this book comes from a study that has been in the making for over 25 years. My research in the Old Testament and New has brought me to an understanding of our calling, our purpose, our blessing. To understand this concept and to have it become practical and relevant to our lives, we must build a sort of bridge. Imagine on one side the bridge is built upon a bedrock layer of truth a structure deep into the earth and it represents the past in relation to between 5000 to 2000 year old inscriptions that reveal our calling. Everyone wants to know what is my place in this big world. And so we build that bridge on the "other side of the mighty river" into our times. So, now we have built 2 structures: called the Past on one side and the Now on this side. In between these 2 "abutments" we build the "Span". These are the principles of the Bible which are eternal, applicable and relevant for all times. The question is what was I born to be? When we can begin to realize our calling, then we can start moving into our purpose and do what we are called to do. It is a process. The purpose of this writing is to help the reader understand this process that God is undertaking in their lives. As Jesus stated, " I have come to

give life and that more abundantly" (John 10:10). We are now ready to build this "Span" of our bridge.

## Chapter One

### Our Calling, Our Blessing

Everyone wants to know what sort of bigger plan and calling that they are able to be a part of. What I have discovered is that our calling has been spelled out over 5000 years ago. It is an ongoing calling that many have been a part of and many are welcomed into. To be part of a bigger plan than that which I was formally aware of has motivated me, no inspired me!

I grew up in a Greek family in the New York City area. My father was proud to be a Greek. He talked about culture and history. As a little boy I loved history. I know so many people are bored of the required classes of early Ancient history, American history, World history, etc. and etc. I was fascinated with the concept of history. Where do we come from? How did our society develop? How did we get here? I used to talk with friends often with questions too deep for them to answer, as well as for me! What is our place in this world? Is there a calling that goes out to everyone? Is there a God way out there? Why was I born? In my search for these answers I found myself in a crisis at the age of 21. By the way, a crisis is not always a bad thing for us. The Greek root word for crisis is defined as "a decision". When we enter into a crisis and the pressure is upon us, then we make

decisions. Some crisis decisions are poor ones while others are good decisions. In my crisis, I decided to live my life for Christ. I surrendered my life to God's plan for my life because my plans were going nowhere. I remember reading the Bible which the oldest writings were over 5000 years old and the earliest were 2000 years. When I caught a glimpse of our calling. I would weep, cry because I felt privileged and special that God would include me, "little old me", into His plans. Plans that were ancient but reaching out to me! When hearing a church worship song with verses that came from the book of Revelation: "out of every tribe, tongue, people and nation, you have formed for Yourself a people"... I would just start tearing up! God is including me? In His big plan for all these ages?

What really is a calling? It is a invitation to be a part of and included into something special. We send out invitations to people all the time. Invitations go out to family and friends to participate in a wedding, birthday party, a special event such as a graduation ceremony at a large university. Could it be, that God is calling you to be a part of a bigger plan that you have ever known? He is sending out His invitations to a special event and wants you to participate. What a privilege and honor to receive this special invitation! God is calling out and inviting everyone to be a part of his plan.

## Our Calling

The Puritans were a group of Protestant believers who desired for the Christian church in England to be reformed or "purified". Their settlement into the New England colonies established not only some colonies that would be the beginning of a new and great nation, but something grander was happening. These Puritans were greatly used to affect the mindset, even a worldview of sorts. Along with their belongings, they carried with them principles to live by. These principles became foundational to this new nation. One of them we would call, a "Protestant work ethic". They believed that everyone, no matter what their vocation, job or role in society is called of God. They believed as the Bible says, "whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might" to the glory and pleasure of God. Live out your life with the principles and teachings of Jesus.

The Puritans taught that there were two distinct universal callings. One was called the "general calling." Everyone was invited to come into a relationship with God through Christ Jesus. He is calling all mankind to come and to be saved. All are called into a relationship with their Creator. Until one responds to that calling they will feel that pull for the rest of their lives. The other calling was more specific. It was a "vocation calling". If you're vocation was to work as a tailor, or in a factory, as a blacksmith or some other role in society,

God has called you there. The Puritans believed that God was involved in every detail of their lives. So, whatever your hand finds to do, then do it with all your might to the glory and pleasure of God. Do your work to the best of your ability. The church was no greater than the home of the worker on the streets. These Puritans were by-products of the Protestant Reformation. To them there was no such thing as a divide between secular and sacred worlds to live in. They had a unified life. They lived out their faith as they accomplished their vocations.

So, whatever job that you have been doing, show yourself worthy of this calling and then people will see your "work ethic". They will see your fruits of labor and will know there is something really special about your life.

I have often thought and have shared with others that there are 6 important decisions that we must prayerfully decide upon:

1. Will we surrender our lives to the Lordship of Jesus Christ?
2. Who will we decide to marry?
3. What Body of believers (Church) will we be a part of?
4. Who will we choose to be our friends?
5. Where will we live?
6. What job/vocation will we choose?



This list of important decisions will have a bearing on us fulfilling our calling. So choose wisely!

I worked a job in Minnesota as a bus driver for a private Christian school when I was in my 20's. I was a new believer in Christ and felt "called" by God to minister! But, I needed the work and a paycheck. One of the first things I observed while driving this busload of Christian boys and girls was startling to me. The girls were the teasers and could bring the bigger and stronger boys to tears as they called them names. The boys knew they could not strike the girls physically, so they "took it in stride" until they could not take it anymore. I would observe the tears rolling down their cheeks. I knew that God had supplied this job for me. I wondered and I prayed as I drove down the snowy highways of the northern suburbs of the Twin Cities area: "Lord, use me to bring a change to this bus filled with Christian kids." Well, I could think that this is a "secular" job and not a ministry so why bother? That is not being true to our calling. I began to spy out this bus to see where I could bring some peace to the environment. I noticed that one of the boys was the "ring leader" and boy was he a tough guy! I told him to sit in the seat next to me, to which he strongly objected. "Why, Mr. Curtis?" "Do I have to!?" I explained to him that I wanted to ask him some questions. I asked him about his future, his plans, his favorite subjects, and the sport teams he followed... He began to feel that I was interested in his life and slowly I gained his heart. The other kids noticed because he was a leader type in their eyes. As the year

progressed the atmosphere of that formerly unruly bus became peaceful, friendly and fun. Near the end of that academic year the principal of the school told me two things. One, he wanted to hire me to be an employee at the school. Two, he let me know that this boy that I took a liking to confided in him saying, "when I grow up, I want to be like Mr. Curtis." Can you see that "Our Calling" goes with us wherever we go, wherever we live and work? God is calling you, right now wherever you are. It is His special invitation to be what He created you to be!

## Our Blessing

The Protestant church believes in the priesthood of all believers. Every Christian believer is called to be a priest. Remember the movie in the 1980s called "Back to the Future"? Marty McFly found himself suddenly thrust back in time as he was speeding in the stainless steel DeLorean sports car equipped with the "Flux Capacitor?" He realized he was in the 1950's! Marty met his mother and father even before he was born. He could see his life based upon his past family situations. We need to go back to the future to understand where we came from and where we are going! We need to take a look back where the purpose and calling began. Ancient plans and purposes were to have a priesthood of believers all over world. This Biblical truth tells us that every believer in Christ Jesus is called to minister. Although this truth is evident in the teachings of the New Testament, it is present as early as Genesis 14 in the Old Testament where it is clearly demonstrated in Melchizedek, King of Salem. The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is something we embrace in our congregation, Harvest Church Broken Arrow. And it is something we practice through team ministry. In our leadership team meetings the youngest leaders are free and even asked to share their thoughts about any given subject. One time in our team meeting, an intern named Judy who was from Scotland and the Toronto School of

Ministry was asked, "What does your home church in Scotland do in this area of church life?" Her insights were helpful to our team. You see, there really should not be any "big I's and little You's." Nor should there be the "professional clergy" and then there is the "laity." As the Founding Pastor (along with my wife Tondi) I really enjoy team ministry at HCBA. I love to see and experience the variety of strengths and treasures that God has deposited in the various members of His Body there. We really are a team ministry, a priesthood working together.

This truth is revealed in the New Testament and it was practiced in the early church as we read of her in the book of Acts. Slowly as the centuries past, the church became more and more institutionalized and the priesthood concept was lost. The people needed to come to the clerics and "priests" if they wanted to go to God or to read the Bible. The believers were now to go through these "intermediators." It was rediscovered in the 16th century as one of the 3 major tenets of the Reformation Era, the other 2 being *sola scriptura* (the authority of Scripture alone) and *sola fide* (salvation by faith alone). Facilitating this reform movement was the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in Martin Luther's Germany, which made the Bible potentially available to all believers. And it was now translated into their "common" language for everyone to read and to understand. Soon, this wonderful truth was rediscovered. Many were persecuted, tortured and martyred for believing and practicing this truth.

As our study of the Word of God unfolds, it will become clear that the priesthood of all believers to which God has called us to is a Melchizedek-type priesthood. Unlike the Levitical priesthood who were placed as priests under the Law, the Melchizedek priesthood was not based on the Law, a family tree or a genealogy to be proved. We will begin to understand through study that this order of priesthood was called before there were exclusive Levi priests. It is an order of priests that out lasts these priests of the period of the Law and in fact are called to be a forever priesthood! By way of this Melchizedek model, God calls us to be priests who bless others. He calls us to be priests who give without looking to receive, who give and seek to bless. And this is something that each believer in Christ is called to do. It is our special priestly calling.

### Melchizedek, the Priest of the Most High God

The first few verses of Genesis 14 record Abram's victory over enemy rulers, made possible in no small part by God's favor. As a result, something very interesting happens. Another king, the king of Jerusalem expresses his deep gratitude to Abram for defeating the enemy kings. This king, called by his title, Melchizedek, brought bread and wine to bless Abram. Interestingly, Melchizedek was called *The Priest of the Most High God*. In Hebrews 7, we read that God has called believers to this same type of priesthood, a Melchizedek kind. And in 1 Peter 2:4, 9, believers are called to be a nation of *holy* and *royal* priests. The New Testament makes it clear that the priesthood would no longer be a

privilege and responsibility of only a few people based on a lineage, education or a social status. It would be the responsibility of each and everyone in Christ. On the basis of the New Birth we *all* have become members of a nation of priests. When we think of priests, we tend to think of the Old Testament and assume that the first ones were the Levites. Or, when we think of priests today, we think of clergymen clothed in distinctive robes and white collars. What is not commonly known is that there was a priesthood that pre-dated the Levites. This was the Melchizedek priesthood. It was not tied to family or to the Law. And this priesthood is our calling. Psalm 110 is a prophesy that God put on David's heart. In the first verse, he writes, "The Lord says to my Lord... sit at my right hand." What this means is this: "God, the Father, (who is the Lord)... said to my Lord (who is the Messiah, Jesus Christ)...sit here at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool." This is a *Messianic* Psalm, a prophesy about the coming Lord Jesus Christ who will rule and reign (at His footstool). In verse 4 of the Psalm, there is another amazing statement about the Messiah: "Thou art a *priest forever*." This is interesting because Jesus is of the tribe of Judah and not of the only qualified tribe: under the Law priests were to be from the tribe of Levi. Jesus would have been forbidden to be a priest, at least being a *Levitical* priest. Nevertheless, the Father God declares Jesus, the Messiah is a priest. The *Divine declaration* is that He is "a priest forever after the *order* of Melchizedek." This "order" came before the Law

and the Levites and this order will outlast them as well, a forever priesthood.

What is an "order?" The Hebrew word for an order is "dibrah." The dictionary defines this word as; manner, cause and mode. The "cause" of the Melchizedek priesthood of believers is to be a blessing. His or Her purpose is to be like Jesus/Melchizedek and bless. the "manner" or "mode" of these followers of Christ is to walk in a way that wherever they go, they bless! David said to his brothers who were not chosen to take on the giant Goliath, "Is there not a cause?" For believers in Jesus this is "Our Cause" and "Our Purpose."

In addition, the word "order" spoken of here comes from the root word, "dabar", which means: "a speech, word or an utterance." Therefore, the majority of blessings that you as a follower of Christ are to administer are words. Words of blessings. Speech that will encourage. Utterances that build up, show the love of God and impact others with a blessing. So, most blessings from this order of Melchizedek priest are not usually material, they are utterances from the heart of God, meant to bless.

### But Who Is This Melchizedek?

He is a somewhat mysterious figure because what is said about him can be interpreted various ways. And there is so much left unsaid that he is shrouded in mystery. Conjectures by people regarding his identity are:

1. Some claim he was an angel.
2. Some say he was a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ.
3. Others believe he is the Holy Spirit in a bodily form.
4. While there are even those who purport that he was the first of an alien "super race" that came upon the earth in ancient times!
5. Some, based upon the statements that he has no beginning, no end, no father, and no mother, say, "Well, if he doesn't die, then he is still with us today roaming somewhere upon the earth.

I propose that Melchizedek is Shem, one of Noah's sons, and that he was in fact, a king and a priest. First, he was a king. Although our western mindset would make us think that *Melchizedek* is a proper name, it is, in fact, an honorable title. In a similar way, while some may suppose that Jesus last name was Christ, it is best understood as His title (*the Christ, the Anointed One*). The word *Melchizedek* is made up of two Hebrew words: *Melchi* meaning "king" and *zedek* meaning "righteousness." So Melchizedek was not his name but it was his title or honorable designation meaning "King of Righteousness." Second, early portions of Genesis speak about the destinies of Noah's three sons, Jephthah, Ham and Shem. Of the 3, only Shem is spoken of in priestly terminology. "Jephthah shall dwell in the *holy tent* of Shem" (Gen. 9:27). His was not simply a shepherd's canvas tent; his was a *holy tent*. The Hebrew word is *ohel* which is translated as a "*holy tabernacle*." Based on this and



more evidence to come, Shem was a priest, even a priest to his family and I will continue to reveal, he was Melchizedek, King of Salem. Thirdly, Abraham lived until 2121 B.C. and Shem lived until 2156 B.C. Abraham's father, Terah, was in the line of Shem; therefore, Abraham knew Shem as the priest of their tribe. So, God's call for us to be royal priests, or kings and priests, after the Melchizedek-type is a call to reign in righteousness. It is a call to be honorable.

## Chapter Two

### Blessings: God, Them, Us

My pastor once made an illustration with a circle. On it was God, Them and Us. He explained that our lives are seasonal. We bless and minister to God at times and at other times, we bless Them (others). There also comes times where God and even others bless Us (me). He said you have to know what season you are in.

Before Melchizedek ever received Abram's tithe, he was a blessing. He was called to bless. Melchizedek said, "I bless you with bread," and, "I bless you with wine." And then he said, "Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth, and blessed be the Most High God." Whenever we see the man, Melchizedek, we will see the word "blessing" accompanying him. Blessing characterizes both his attitude and his actions. The motive is to give and

to bless. It is a specific calling that is two-fold: to bless God and to bless people. This is our call today as well.

One morning as I awoke, I recalled the dream that I just had. I had a dream that I was in a western city in the US whose name is Laramie in Wyoming. I was on a street corner praying for people and giving out food. I woke up and the dream was so vivid. I told my wife Tondi, who is quite a "perceiver type" and has received many dreams from God. I asked her, "What do you think this means?" Tondi said, "I don't know." So, I just shelved this dream away and started my day off with a puzzling beginning. The next morning when I woke up I immediately realized that the dream was from God and that I was to go to Laramie! That seemed strange. "Who do you know in Laramie?" No one. "Have you ever been there before?" No. But, there was a definite call to go there and see what God would do. As I was flying to Denver, I was thinking of how the disciples would just go out like this, to cities that they had never been to before. I rehearsed the instruction of Jesus when He said if you go to a city and find a "worthy person", then stay with them. (Matt. 10-11) They would find a synagogue or a place where people were praying. A thought came to me, that I should find a Christian bookstore in Laramie and start there. I did not even know if there was such a place. I rented a car at the airport and drove the two hours north to the college town of Laramie. I drove around it in a quick 5-10 minute timeframe. I decided to pull into a convenience store and ask someone if the town had a bookstore. Still walking

outside and about to go, I heard the Lord speak to my heart: "The people of Laramie think that I have forsaken them." Inside the store, I asked if there was a Christian bookstore and the clerk replied, "Yes" and gave me to directions, which were about two blocks away. Then I heard him say, "Well, welcome to Laramie, the God-forsake town of Laramie!" I walked out praying this prayer, "No Lord, you have not forsaken them, guide me to where you want me to go."

I found the bookstore and entered inside where I saw two people talking; one appeared to be the customer and the other was someone who worked there. The worker approached me and asked, "Can I help you?" And I "chickened out" and replied, "No thanks, I am just looking." I took the easy way out. How am I going to tell her that I had a dream about Laramie, I would feel foolish? She came back a few minutes later and asked again, "can I help you?" So, I just starting telling her the entire dream... She looked at me and said, "that dream is about me!" I own this store. I am discouraged and am thinking of quitting. She opened up her heart. We prayed together. She was stirred in her faith and said that I must meet some more people of Laramie. She placed phone calls and had me meet a Bible Study group. She told me of a pastor on the poor side of town that could probably need some help. I spent time with the group first and talked to them about the dream, shared a Bible study and then a few hours later went off to the other side of the railroad tracks. I met a pastor of a small church. Shared my

dream and we talked and prayed together for an hour. I had brought money intending to bless the town of Laramie, so I gave him a new \$100 dollar bill. He was so thankful. Then I asked him, "Is there someone you know who is in need of food and is spiritually lost?" He gave me directions, first to the Walmart and I bought approximately \$175 worth of grocery items, and then directions to the trailer home up into the local mountain range. Just as I saw in the prophetic dream of Laramie, I now was handing out food to a family in need. I told them about the dream. That God had not forsaken them, He had His eye on this family. I prayed for them and then asked them to pray and turn their lives over to the Lord. It was now close to 9 P.M. I had arrived in this city at 10 A.M. Except for the first 5 minutes of "playing it safe" in the bookstore that morning and feeling foolish, I had been non-stop sharing, praying and helping people in Laramie, Wyoming for almost 11 hours! I flew back to Oklahoma and my feet almost did not even touch the ground! The Lord called me to Laramie to bless His people who felt discouraged and forsaken. I was following "Our Calling" and ministering "Our Blessing." We are a priesthood of believers in Jesus Christ. We are in the same order of the Melchizedek priests as Him. We are called to Bless God and to Bless People. That experience would be similar to us going into the gym and beginning an new exercise program. Working out and growing stronger as the days of exercise would go by. My "spiritual muscles" would be stretched many more times, as you will read about more of my "adventures with God."

Let me ask you a question: how important was it for me to obey God and not "play it safe" and do nothing? How many times does God prompt us to bless someone and we "chicken out" and reason it away? We really are all called to be priests, no matter our age, economic and educational levels. We are called to be an order of Melchizedek priests who are functioning in this earth, blessing God and blessing people. We go out into the world. We are "blessers!" That is what we do; bless. Whatever it is that we can do to bless others, we are to do it with all of our might as unto the Lord, whether in our words or our deeds. So, you and I are called to bless God in worship and in our service, and we are called to bless people. This is the essence of the Melchizedek priesthood. Jesus' whole life demonstrates the Melchizedek priesthood. On one occasion, His disciples said to Him, "Send them away! We don't have anything to feed them." (Luke 9:12) They were concerned about *servicing*, which is more like the Levitical model of priesthood. But Jesus replied as a Melchizedek-type priest. My paraphrase of His response is, "No. I want to bless them. I want to bless them because they need a blessing. I have the order of the Melchizedek priesthood burning in my heart. I am called to this purpose of bringing a blessing to others. In the morning I was in prayer early so that I blessed my Father and now I want to bless these people and give them bread to eat as well as fish." That is the kind of priesthood to which we are called. Each of us, who are followers of Christ, are a Melchizedek-type priest. And our calling is all about blessing the Most High God and people. David's life is

another example of a Melchizedek-type of priest. 2 Samuel 6 as well as I Chronicles 15 tell us of David bringing back the ark of the covenant/the Presence of God to the nation of Israel. Despite having made mistakes in life, David gets it right this time. He instructs the Levi priests to carry the Presence on their shoulders, which is a picture of where the Presence of God should always rest: their minds. Let the peace of God rule and reign in your minds! And, motivated by a heart filled with gratitude, David dances before the Lord with all his might. He is blessing God! His dancing, however, brings an expression of disdain from his wife, Michal. But David replies, "Do you think this is foolish for me as a king? I am going to take off this royal robe that only kings wear and be just like everyone else here praising God and I will be even more undignified!" He is blessing God with all of his heart, soul, mind and strength! And then he completes his calling as a Melchizedek-type priest when he turns his attention to the people. He gives everyone bread, wine, and meat. He blesses people. Blessing God and blessing people. This is our calling and this is our blessing.

### A Call To Bless Through a Dream

I had taken a few short term mission trips to Central America and also to Chile, South America. Upon returning home from Chile, I had a very detailed dream from God. How did you know that it was a dream from God, you say? First of all I do not dream that often, or rather I do not recall dreams. This dream was vivid. I felt the Presence of God while I was dreaming. I saw that our church in the Tulsa area

of Oklahoma was planning on planting a church in Santiago, Chile. The church leadership was comprised of half Chileans and half Americans. I was training the both teams for 7 months. There was a book of subjects to teach them. I flew down to Chile for their training and came back to the USA to do the other part of the team's training. The service there in Chile was bilingual. I awoke and felt the Presence of God so strong in my room. I woke my wife Tondi and shared with her my dream. She sat up quickly and pointed her finger in my face and said, "This is God and this is how we are going to do this: we are going to meet every Tuesday and Thursday night with the US team and have meals before the teaching..." I was amazed. This is my wife who does not travel that much and really would rather I not travel too much at this time of our lives. I stated to her that this would mean I will travel a lot. She said "This is God!" I replied, "Who are you? In my wife's body?"

I shared this dream with the church in the US and three young people came forward to say that they felt all along a calling to missions and South America! I travelled to Chile and shared the dream and 4 people in Santiago said, "We are with you." The Americans saved up enough money to be self supporting in rent, food, and expenses for one year living in Santiago and were launching themselves into missions. I have known many people who have said, "I want to go into full time ministry when I can be salaried." These 3 young people were paying their own way to go into a fulltime ministry! They were truly catching their *Calling* to

be a *Blessing*. A church began 7 months later in Chile. Many people were blessed there. I could tell many stories. But one just keeps coming to mind: Carla. I met her in Chile and she was a sad. I counseled her and discovered that she had only one more semester to complete an Engineering degree at the best university in Chile. As I asked her why she had not completed her degree, she answered: depression. I shared with Carla some healing principles. She was so burdened down with the needs of her family. She felt that her success at school and eventually in a career was solely on her shoulders (heart). She was so hard on herself. She could not even get out of bed some days. We prayed together. Releasing her two sisters and even her father to the Lord, she realized she had been this way from a child. The message of her heart had always been, "I need to take care of my whole family." God did not want that. Carla asked God to forgive her for taking on that role that was not hers. We prayed a lot. I said that God has a future for her. She replied, "I am 30 years old, what man would want to marry me?" Carla started to come out of her depression more and more. I had the privilege to fly down to Chile and perform her and Sebastian's wedding. Today, they have three children! You see, our "Church Planters" from Oklahoma, established a church in Chile and brought many blessings to God and to the Chilean people! These "Church Planters" were truly a Melchizedek-type of priesthood. They were responding to their calling and blessing. You too have this same "Calling" to minister these same kinds of "Blessings."



## A Forever Priesthood

This priesthood was instituted prior to the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. It existed before the Levite priests were established under the Law, and it remained after the priesthood of the Law ended when the temple was destroyed. It is a forever priesthood. There tends to be confusion about things that are "under the Law" or "not under the Law." Have you ever heard someone say, "That was under the Law and we are not under the Law anymore, so that does not apply today"? But if we look at what Jesus said in Matthew 5:6-7, we obviously need to rethink that concept. Jesus recalled a number of the 10 Commandments, saying, "You heard it said 'you shall not kill,' but I tell you that you can't even get angry. "You saw it on tables of stone, but I am going to write it on the tables of your hearts." So to say that we are not under the Law today is a generalization that leads to a mistaken position. It is correct to say that we are no longer under the ceremonial aspects of the Law. That is, we are not under the requirements of observing festivals, circumcision or performing animal sacrifices. Nor are we under all the ceremony of the Law with the outward symbols and signs. These were all pointing to Christ Jesus and as He went down to the river Jordan to be baptized by John, the "Baptist" said of Him: "Behold the Lamb of God." Jesus came and fulfilled this part of the Law. As a result, we do not have to go up to Jerusalem and perform annual sacrifices. Nevertheless, there are other aspects of the Old Testament that we are

called to live by. And these aspects tend to go deeper than ceremony. The moral aspects of the Law go deeper.

### A Testimony of a Blessing at the Airport

One day, I was preparing to fly to Chile on another short term mission trip and it was to be by a standby status. That depends on an open seat for me to fly. As I looked up on my computer to decide on the Delta flight to Santiago, I noticed that there were so few seats that were open. In my heart I felt an urgency to go. When I arrived in Atlanta, I needed to wait until 10:00 pm for the flight to take off. I waited from the morning (10 am) until the time it came for me to board the flight. The gate agent said it looks good for you because there are 11 people who have not checked in. He said, "just wait a few minutes." Three minutes before the door would be closed, I looked down the long hallway and saw 11 elderly people shuffling along real slow. The agent said, "I am sorry sir, you will not get on the Santiago flight tonight, it is totally full now." Well, now I needed to find a hotel and in my heart I still felt that God is in this whole thing, so I will try again tomorrow night. I checked into the hotel (not the best), spent the night and arrived at 1:30 pm the next day and went to the airport at Atlanta's Hartsfield Jackson International. Having so much time to spend there I decided to wait in the very large waiting area and to set up "shop" to work with my laptop. It needed a charge and so I was searching for an electrical outlet to plug it in. In a huge room with so many people and so many outlets, I could not find one open. I sensed the Holy Spirit saying to me, "keep

searching." So, I walked all around this large place looking again for an outlet. I felt a little foolish walking around that same area, with the same people watching me. Or, so I thought that they were all watching me. Finally! I found an electrical outlet that was available. I plugged in my computer and sat down ready to get to work on some project. There was no power! The reason the outlet was open was because it was not working. Again, I sensed the Spirit leading me on to continue the search.

Now I looked down a long hallway and saw the baggage claim area and so I thought, surely there will be at least one outlet open with not many people sitting in this "non-waiting" area. I saw one right by a bench type seat. I rushed over to claim my "power" for my laptop. It worked! I heard a man's voice next to me say, "that is a good book you are reading" and I turned towards the voice to see a man with a dark complexion. I said, "Hello, my name is Jim Curtis, what is yours?" He replied, "My name is Purushalamallatum....." "But, you can call me Purus." I asked Purus where was he from told and he said from India. I had a thought at this moment, "Maybe, this is the reason that I did not get on the plane last night: to meet a man from India in the airport!" I prayed to the Father to give me an opportunity to share the Gospel of Christ with this Indian man. I asked this man if he was of the Hindu religion, to which he replied, "Yes." I proceeded to state that I knew something about his religion and wanted to see if I was correct. "Purus, is it true that you believe that if you do good

things (works) in this life that then you accrue good karma for the next life?" His answer was affirmative. I asked about reincarnation and if you did good things (works) then in that next level you ascend to a higher reincarnated life? Again, the answer was affirmative. But, that if you did bad things (works) then you were "storing up" the bad karma and would come back into a lower level of reincarnation life. This could be a life of poverty, sickness and suffering. Again, "Yes, that is basically true", said Purus. There are 7 levels of this reincarnation "work-system of religion" to which Purus asked me, "What is a work-system?" As I explained this to him, I realized a simple but profound truth: that every religion has some sort of a work-system to it and that Christianity is the most unique religion because there is not a work-system towards salvation. As I shared this thought, he looked puzzled, and so I explained to him about another religion: Islam. There are 5 "Pillars" to this religion. 1) There is only one God, Allah and Mohammed is the prophet. 2) Giving of Alms to the poor of 2% (money). 3) Fasting on the month of Ramadan. 4) Prayer every day towards the holy city of Mecca. And 5) A mandatory pilgrimage to this city at least once in your lifetime.

I said, "Purus, I do not want to offend you but every religion is the same in this respect, they all have a work-system."

I told him about what Paul the Apostle said in Ephesians 2:8, "we are saved by grace, through faith, it is the gift of God so that no man can boast." Purus asked, "Who is Paul and what

is an apostle?" I was not accustomed to someone not having at least a minimal Christian world-view. I began to explain to him the plan of salvation that God, Our Father had sent His only Son, Jesus to the world. And that Christ lived a sinless and perfect life in order that He could pay the penalty of our sins and be crucified on the cross. God raised Christ up from the dead into heaven with Lordship over all. Whoever believed on Jesus would not die but live forever. It is by faith and not by a work-system that we can be assured that we will definitely go to heaven. Then, I said to him, "Purus, When we know that God accepts us, when we know that God loves us, then we want to work for Him, do you see the distinction?" He saw this truth. Now, I asked, "Purus, do you want this in your life?" "Yes!", said Purus. He prayed along with me and received Christ as the Lord of his life. We spent hours together and I shared with him many more Biblical truths. As he hugged me and boarded his plane, I had a thought: "What if God had this all planned out for me to meet just this one man in the largest airport in the world, and maybe it is not His plan for me to go to Chile?" As I approached my gate for the 10:00 pm Delta flight #147 bound for Santiago, I stated to the gate agent that I was flying standby. He said, "I am sorry sir, this flight is full and really it looks full for the rest of the week as well." I now realized that God led me there for this one man, Purus. Normally in Atlanta, the last flight back to Tulsa has left at around 8:30 pm. I looked at the screen for departing flights and saw a Tulsa flight had been delayed and would leave at 9:45 instead! If I hurried, I could make it back home to Tulsa!

I did get on that flight and when I arrived at my home, my wife, Tondi greeted me at the front door as she heard the door opening. She asked me, "What are you doing here? You are supposed to be going to Chile?" I stated to her that God loved a man so much that He directed me to share Christ with a man from India. And that my purpose in going to the airport in Atlanta was not to go to Chile, but to lead this man to the Lord. She was surprised and I was amazed.

By obeying the Holy Spirit and sharing the Gospel. It is so important to obey the leading of the Lord! He wants to direct our paths to bring glory and blessing to Him and to bless others. That day at Hartsfield Airport, another Melchizedek priest was called out and his name is Purus!! I was following "Our Calling" and ministering "Our Blessing." What about you? Do you sense your calling and purpose? Did not Jesus say to His people, "It is better to give than to receive?" Follow your calling and purpose more readily, obey His promptings and you will find yourself feeling fulfilled in your heart because this priesthood of Melchizedek is what you were made for!

But we are also called to bless God. How can this be accomplished? Little "old me?" blessing the God of the Universe and all Galaxies? You see, this is our calling and purpose as believers in Jesus Christ. To bless God and to bless people. Have you ever experienced a time of worship say in a church service and as you are blessing God with your song and heart then you feel His Presence? Once, in a revival meeting on the East coast of the US, the worship

leader sung out a song called, "Show me Your Face Lord." I sung from such a deep place in my heart that I felt "caught up in worship blessing the Lord." What an incredible experience. Blessing and loving God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength. We are called to this my friend!

We should "sanctify" the Lord

We see an interesting pattern in the life of Moses. It generally goes this way: there is opposition to his authority and life and he humbly goes before God to justify him. Then, the Lord steps into the situation and reveals Himself as standing with Moses. On one occasion, in Exodus 17 the people of Israel are murmuring against Moses because there was no water at a certain place. They were thirsty and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt to make us die of thirst here?" Now here comes the pattern of the humble man, Moses: "Moses cries out to the Lord, what am I to do? They are ready to stone me?" God says, "Take your staff in your hand and *I will stand there before you.*" "Strike the rock and water will come out for the people to drink." This pattern of events repeats itself on many occasions in Moses' life. He is humble when he experiences the test of difficulties, opposition and criticisms. He allows the Lord to justify him, to defend him and to reveal Himself to others rather than to "take it personal." Moses passes many of these kinds of tests. That is, until he faces another one as they are closer to entering into the land that was promised to them by God. Sometimes the many tests that we face build and wear us out. The Scripture says, "Grow not weary

in well doing." We maintain ourselves with good responses and character but because of the weariness, we can fail the next test. In Numbers 20 we see this failure in Moses and the consequences of the failed experience. Again, there was no water for the people to drink. They "came against" Moses and said they wished they would have died. "Why have you brought us to this place?" Now Moses at first responds as he should by going to God and falling on his face before Him. God says, "Take your rod and speak to the rock" that is before you and "it shall bring forth water." Moses speaks, but not to the rock as he was told, but to the people who were against him, and says, "You rebels!" "Why must I fetch you water" Moses hits the rock instead of speaking. He strikes it two times. This event changes Moses' destiny. God tells him, "Because you did not believe Me" and "did not sanctify Me in the sight of all of the people you will not go into the land that was promised."

Why is this such a big deal? He hit the rock two times instead of talking to it? So what? But an eternal principle is at stake here. The rock represented something or rather Someone. This symbolic and prophetic event was to be a foreshadow of what was to come in the future. Paul, an apostle (a function of his calling and not a title) receives the revelation of this "Rock." In 1 Corinthians 10:4, he states that Israel "drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ." You see, the heavenly, divine and eternal principle is this: Christ was to be crucified once and for all. Done! Finished! Never to be crucified again



and again as the incessant animal sacrifices were represented in the Old Testament. He would later on say while on the cross, "It is finished." Moses did not obey the Lord. He was the rebel! What he accused the people of, he was guilty. Moses did not sanctify the Lord in the eyes of the people. What does sanctify mean? In the Hebrew language of that day this had a sense of meaning "to separate." In the times of testing in his past, the implication is that Moses would be humble, turn to God for his defense and help. He had "sanctified the Lord" in the eyes of people. He had separated himself and allowed the Lord to move. In the NIV it reads: "Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them." This time of testing for him, the weariness affected him, his anger took over and he failed the test with the consequences that followed. How sobering is it when we read about this event and hear the Lord saying, "you will not be going into the Land."

Fellow believers in Christ, this calling as a Melchizedek priest is the highest calling! Make it sure. It is not that complicated. You are called to bless God and to bless others. This is "Our Calling and Our Blessing!"

## Another Blessing on a Plane

I was returning on a plane from Santiago, Chile and I notice that the young girl sitting next to me was reading a book. The title of the book is: The Da Vinci Code. I inquired how she liked the book. She said it is very interesting and then she asked me have you read this book? I explained that I had not but that I knew the premise of the book. I explained also that I have a History degree and that I'm aware of certain authors who are trying to discredit Christianity through conspiracy theories and supposed lost Gospels. I felt drawn to her, the kind of drawing that a father feels for a daughter. I explained that I was a pastor and that I was flying home from a church that we began in Chile. Then I asked her permission so that I could ask her personal question. Are you married? She replied no. Do you want to be married? To which she replied yes but I haven't found the right man. I told her that I have counseled young people. And that young girls transfer onto men the issues they have had with her father. By the way she told me she was a Christian but has not been attending any church. I then asked her how is her relationship with her father. To this he replied it is good. I dug a little deeper, and asked her has your relationship with your father always been good? She replied, "Oh no, my father was an alcoholic! My father was very irresponsible! He wasted all of his money on alcohol. My poor mother had to work so hard to put food on the table and to pay the bills." She repeated, "he was so irresponsible!" When she said this phrase there was such a

strong inflection in her voice. This was now her heart speaking. I explained to her the biblical law of judging and of sowing and reaping as well as when you dishonor your father your days will not go well with you, (Matthew 7:1/Deuteronomy 5:16). I continued to explain to her that she possibly had made a vow in her heart that "all men are irresponsible." And now subconsciously when you meet a young man and the relationship is going well, all of a sudden there's that feeling in your heart. Withdraw! I'm not sure! And suddenly there's distance in your heart towards him who you formally liked. She replied, "that's amazing, that is what happens to me!" As the pilot was instructing us that we are in a descent into the airport in Tulsa I told her that we can pray. You can ask God to forgive you for judging your father. We can pray together. We can break this inner vow that you made in your heart that all men are irresponsible. This is the vow that is directed your life. And so she prayed and asked God to forgive her. And I prayed for her to break and renounce the vow: that all men are responsible. Upon arrival, when we can turn on our cell phones, I overheard her say to her mother, "Mom, I sat next to a pastor on the plane and God showed him everything about my life, it was amazing Mom, I want you to meet him." As we both walked to pick up our luggage she saw her mother. The young girl said. Mom this is the man! As we drove home I shared with my wife Tondi the story of the girl named Kristin. We had exchanged e-mail addresses. Two months later, she wrote to me that she had returned to her church. Another e-mail came to me and she said that she met a man in the church.

Later on another e-mail. She stated that she and this Christian young man were serious and were attending the pre-marriage counseling classes at their church. This was a great blessing to me. To know that God had planned for me to meet a broken young woman. And that He would use me to bring a blessing on an airplane. God wants to use you in bringing His blessings to earth. On airplanes, on buses, in stores, in the streets, on your jobs, and in your neighbors. God is calling you. You have a "Calling" and you have a "Blessing."

## Chapter Three

Our calling can be altered

Numbers 14:34 (KJV) "After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise."

The background to this verse is that the people again are murmuring against Moses. He had sent 12 spies (representing the 12 tribes) into the land of promise. Deuteronomy chapter one states that the journey from where they were into the land, was 11 days. They could have entered into their promises in just 11 days! When the 12 spies returned to give their report to Moses and the people, there was a majority report and a minority report. The majority (10 spies) stated that the people of the land were "giants!" and that we are like "grasshoppers!" Then

Caleb (alongside Joshua) told the people near Moses to be quiet, and he said, "We should certainly go up and take the land for ourselves. We can certainly do it." But the 10 men who had gone with him said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are." And those men gave the Israelites a bad report about the land they explored, saying, "The land that we explored is too large to conquer." So, the majority were speaking about the facts. The people of the land were bigger, the land was vast and they had walled cities. But, the minority report was stating the truth: "If the Lord is with us, let us go up at once! It is only 11 days to get to our promised land from God. We can do it!" You see, facts are outweighed by the truth.

Yet, the people listened to the majority. It always speaks louder to us. (See the parable about Wisdom from God in Ecclesiastes 9:13-18). The people cried and spoke against Moses "all night." They said, "Let us make a captain and return back to Egypt!" Moses and Aaron (his priestly brother) fall on their faces (they are sanctifying the Lord) and Joshua "rent his clothes" as a sign of mourning. When a person would tear his clothes this was an outward sign that something terrible had happened--some disaster or some calamity had taken place. It was also a sign of deep sorrow and mourning over sins.

God states that they will receive an altered plan now! Because they murmured; the 40 days it took for the spies to journey into the land and to return, it will now be a journey of 40 years (a generation will live, die and a newer one will go in, a "believing generation"). The phrase, "My breach of promise" has this meaning also: "My altered purpose." Israel could have gone into the promised land now but the

plan was "altered." Israel will get their promises in 40 years. Paul writes in Romans 11:29 (NIV) "for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable." They are going in, but it will be much later. Let's learn from this event in the Bible that we have a great "Calling" and a "Blessing" to live out in our lives right. Why wait to respond to it? Let us go up at once and possess our "land of promise!" Let's be a blessing today!

### Tithing and the Priesthood

After Melchizedek blessed Abram, Abram gave him tithes. Tithing can become a quarrelsome issue for some. Possibly because of financial abuse and manipulations about this subject, people may have moved away from this Biblical principle. Some may even have been told, "If you do not tithe then God is going to..." You complete these thoughts if you want. This kind of intimidation is wrong. Others say, "That's Old Testament and we are not under the Law." And this is another form of intimidation. An intimidation meant to shut dialog and reasonable thinking down. Both positions are misinformed and wrong.

But that is not good enough because tithing is in the New Testament, as well as the Old Testament. For example, In Matthew 23:23, Jesus said, "These things (that is tithing) you ought to do. And more." In Hebrews 7:4-10, the writer points out that the greater priesthood which is forever, gets the tithe. Before the Law was instituted, Melchizedek received tithes. Interestingly, tithing is not exclusively a Judeo-Christian practice. In the ancient world, other nations and peoples practiced this custom. And in a similar way,

before there ever was a Law and a Levitical priesthood, there were priests. An example of this is Balaam whose activities were clearly those of a priest. Another interesting reference to show this is found in Numbers 3:13-14. Before there was a Law and before the Levites, there was an expectation that the first born son of each Israelite family was to participate in a sort of priestly function. But this pattern was disrupted by the sin of the people at Mt. Sinai when they chose to worship the golden calf out of Egypt. As a result, God shifted the priesthood away from every tribe and family and gave that privilege to the sons of Levi. This tribe chose the "Lord's side." Exodus 32:26 tell us that God chose Levi as priest "instead"!

Therefore, the priesthood of the Law, the Levites are like a parenthesis. By parenthesis, I mean "something that is inserted and by the very fact that it is inserted, has a beginning and an ending." So the Levitical priesthood was instituted and concluded; that is, it had a beginning and an ending. Another important consideration is that a person at the time of this writing could be Hebrew by birth and not be a Levite priest because to be one, a person has to prove lineage in the tribe of Levi. By the way, the term; Jewish comes from the word of being from the tribe of Judah. Jesus was a Judahite. So, for God to proclaim in Psalm 100:4, that the Messiah was a priest shows that this kind of priesthood is not from a family genealogy. Proof was needed to determine who was your father and mother for the Levi kind of priests. This issue of family lineage is important in

understanding the expressions used to describe Melchizedek. Without accurate knowledge of the usage of phrases such as, "without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life," some have made the person of Melchizedek more mysterious than he is. In the Greek, these phrases are understood to mean "without pedigree." The writer is simply referring to the absence of a genealogy that is required for the Levitical priesthood. In so doing, he is pointing out to Hebrew Christians that the Melchizedek priesthood does not require this natural lineage. This order of priests has no end of life! To these Hebrew Christians, whose thoughts about the priesthood had been for centuries being this one set way (Levi pedigree), the writer is showing the need for a better priesthood. (Hebrews 7:11-12) <sup>11</sup> *Even though the Law of Moses says that the priests must be descendants of Levi, those priests cannot make anyone perfect. So there needs to be a priest like Melchizedek, rather than one from the priestly family of Aaron.* <sup>12</sup> *And when the rules for selecting a priest are changed, the Law must also be changed.*

So, there needs to be a priest like Melchizedek and the Bible points to Jesus and His People. Even if we are not Jewish, because this priesthood is based on the new birth and the new creation man that we have become in Christ Jesus. This was God's plan from the beginning, a sort of "Plan A" before "Plan B" (Levitical order) was brought into the picture. His plan all along was to have people like me and you to bless



Him and to bless others in the earth. And we get the privilege to follow this plan, to live in this plan and to be used in God's original plan. And that is "Our Calling, Our Blessing!"

### The Book of Hebrews Portal

The best place to get an accurate understanding of our relationship to the Melchizedek priesthood is found in the Epistle to the Hebrews, especially chapters 6 and 7. If we do not understand the context, then we can misinterpret the teaching. To interpret any part of the Bible correctly, it is vital to have an accurate knowledge of the context. It is true that the Bible is God's "personal letter" to each of us, but it is not to be by "private interpretation" (2 Peter 1:20). To start with, the best approach for each of us when reading the Bible is to understand that this is an ancient book. It is written within certain cultural contexts and is best understood in terms of customs, thought patterns and situations of the day.

The Holy Spirit can take what is written and quicken it to us as we read. He can speak specifically and directly to us from any part of God's word. But if we will understand the Bible in context, we will be less likely to be misled or confused by faulty interpretations. So then, what is the context of the Epistle to the Hebrews? First, it is a personal letter from the author to the Hebrew Christians of the New Testament era. That identifies the original audience to whom the author was writing, and this is a very important aspect of context.

By contrast, this was not written to Americans or Europeans or anyone else in the 21st century. It was originally written to a particular group, Hebrews of the first century. Now, we also know that is a God breathed letter containing principles that are relevant to you and me today. But it is important that we understand what the author meant and what the original readers understood by what was written. It's the original audience. They were Jews, the apostle's audience. Although Paul was called to the Gentiles, whenever he would enter a new town or city, he would first ask, "is there any synagogue here?" In other words, he first sought out the Jews. The majority of the early believers, in fact, were Jews. And then the Gentiles started getting grafted in, so that by the end of recorded Bible times, perhaps the end of the first century, the scales tipped and the majority of believers would be Gentiles. Jesus warned of this in Matthew 24 in which he alerted his listeners that there is coming a generation to experience wars and earth quakes and that many would be put on trial in the synagogues. He warned of troubles to come that would cause many to fall away from "The Faith." Indeed, by the end of the first century, a great falling away had occurred amongst the Jewish people. This process can be seen in Scripture. When the book of Acts opens, most of the believers are Jewish but by the end of the book, there has been a significant falling away. A falling away from what, to what? A falling away from the simplicity of the gospel to the old ways of the Law and pre-Christian Judaism with its ceremonies, festivals, circumcisions, and so on. (See Paul's

letter to the Galatians). In fact, "except you be circumcised according to the law of Moses you cannot be saved" becomes their message again.

So these Jewish believers are the audience to whom Paul is writing. Whereas, in many of his letters to churches he addresses conflicts between church members, moral sins in the congregations, here in this letter, the only sin he writes about is apostasy. The falling away. But, where were they falling away to? Specifically, the falling away is a falling back into Judaism. Scholars believe that the date of this letter is around 68 A.D. They are Hebrew Christians, who, at this time, were turning away from the New Covenant of the Blood of Jesus Christ to the Old Covenant with its symbols, laws, and ceremonies. This was the point of the writer and this knowledge provides an all important context that we need to recognize in order to grasp what the writer is saying. Without this insight, we can poorly spin what we read.

### Let's Look at Hebrews Chapter Six

In verse 1, the phrase, "therefore leaving" implies that the reader is going on from a previous statement. It does not suggest abandoning what has gone before. Rather, it suggests that a foundation is in place and it is time to build on it. The writer is telling us to go on to discover and embrace the exciting plan of God. This is the sort of thing that inspires us to pursue a destiny that goes beyond such things as our job, economic status, family history, or social

status. Each of us has a divine destiny that we have the privilege and responsibility to apprehend. So we are to pursue it! That is the mandate of "therefore leaving the principles." As another translation says, "leaving the elementary principles" of the doctrine of Christ, let us now build on that foundation. But to do so, we must first have clear and accurate understanding of the foundation. In this case, to attain that, we must go to Leviticus 16:8-26. This is where we find the four main principles of the doctrine of Christ to which the writer of Hebrews refers.

1. The statements, "repentance [away] from dead works" or "ceremony" and "faith toward God," describe this process.
2. "Doctrine of baptisms" (note the plural, baptisms) referred to the ceremonial washings of the sacrifices.
3. "Laying on of hands" represented an act whereby the sins of the people were transferred to the sacrificial animals as the priest laid his hands on the animal for that purpose.
4. "Resurrection of the dead" and the "eternal punishment" phrases were also understood by the Hebrew believers to be part of the ceremonial sacrificial process. By lot, one sacrificial goat was released while the other was slaughtered. The goat that was set free (called the scapegoat) represented resurrection of the dead and the slaughter of the other symbolized judgment for the sins of the

nation. This was also demonstrated with 2 doves, one received the "punishment" (death) while the other bird received the "resurrection" (set free to fly into the air).

So, then, the doctrine of Christ represents all the symbols and ceremonies of Judaism pointing to Jesus Christ. The Hebrew believers were to understand that these doctrines pointed to the Messiah, the One who was to come. But they are also to understand that, now that he has come, they are to move on from those foreshadows to all that God has prepared for those who love Him. They are to embrace the fullness of God's plan. Messiah has come! And that changes everything!

### The Perfect Priesthood

And so the author of Hebrews says "let us go on unto perfection." What a verse this is! The word translated perfection comes from the Greek word telios, which means "completion or maturity" or what the whole thing is about. And so he says we are to change our focus from the foundation, to what God actually intends to build on that foundation. Let's do that! Let's go on to completeness! The writer tells us that to do this, we must not spend more time laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and faith towards God. We are not to continue with the doctrine of baptisms, the laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment, and so on, as found all under the Law. All has been fulfilled in Christ,

and now it is time to move on with God and his plan. Remember! This is written to Hebrew Christians. Before accepting Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah, a Jew was required every year to go to the Temple and offer up an animal sacrifice. The poor would offer up pigeons, the middle class, a lamb and the rich, a bull. The priest would take the sacrifice into the tabernacle, wring its neck, cut off its head, and pour out the blood on the mercy seat and into the fire. Whoosh! The flames would go up and the sweet smelling savor of that sacrifice would ascend to God. Based on motive in obedience to God's way of forgiveness, the person was forgiven. And that person recognized that righteousness, which is the right standing with God, was not based on human effort or performance, but on God's grace and ability. Yet, this was done every year!

All of the basic elements pointing to Christ were in the Law with its ceremonies and sacrifices. But Hebrews chapter 6 tells the Jews that, because of Christ's finished work on the cross, they were to lay aside the ceremonies and sacrifices and go on to telios or perfection. Verses four through six can be hard to understand. These verses say that it is impossible, if a person "falls away", to experience reinstatement as a believer. But the context helps the reader to understand what this meant to the Hebrew Christians, the people to whom the letter was originally written. They understood this in a way that we cannot understand unless we understand their cultural mindset and religious perspective. The issue here concerns what the

passage meant to them! To the Hebrew Christians, the passage meant this: Once, they were under the Law and had to fulfill all the requirements of sacrifice and ceremony. But when they embraced God's provision of forgiveness and redemption found only in Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Sacrificial Lamb, they no longer were to depend on the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Law. Jesus had fulfilled the requirements of the Law. Don't go backwards! The sacrificial lamb was no longer an acceptable sacrifice to God because He had provided The Lamb. But some Hebrew Christians were being pressured by family and religious rulers to renounce Christ and to turn back to the old ways of the Law. They were to depend solely on Christ's work on the cross. The sacrificial lamb had already been slain! To revert to dependence on the sacrifices of the Law actually served to deny the sufficiency of God's plan in Christ. Today, when Christians read this without understanding of this context, they think that they cannot be restored if they have, for whatever reason, departed the faith and fallen into sin. But that is not what the writer meant. Instead, he was talking to Hebrew Christians who knew he was telling them not to return to the ways and means of the Law for forgiveness. This is confirmed in the latter part of the book of Acts where Paul is warning Jews not to turn back from Christ to the Law. It is a fact of church history that the church, once composed entirely of Hebrew Christians, was soon made up of Gentile Christians. In fact, by the end of the first century, the church could boast of relatively few Hebrew believers. But the writer of Hebrews was giving the

Hebrew Christians fair warning that if they, as a nation, turned away from God's redemptive provision in Christ to the antiquated methods of the Law, it would be impossible for them to come back to God. (This is written about the first century Hebrew Christians. It is possible of course for Jewish people today to turn to the Lord.) They're reverting to an outmoded practice which constituted a denial of the finished work of Jesus Christ. Having once tasted of his way of salvation, only then to reject it, they could no longer be renewed in the faith. To revert to the services of a Levitical priest and animal sacrifice for the remission of sin, actually put Jesus Christ to open shame. In God's mind, the work of Christ is telios, complete, mature, perfect! We can add nothing to it and we are to take nothing away from it by the works of the Law. And with this telios way, the priesthood is no longer what it was under the Law. Now each of us is a priest of the order, not of Levi, but of Melchizedek. And we have the great honor and an awesome responsibility to walk in.

## Chapter Four

### A New Focus and Feeling

In this new priesthood, the focus changes from "I" and "me" to "He" and "Him." It is not what I can do, it is what He has done. Our testimony changes from being about me and mine, to bringing glory to Him. Not only does our



perspective change, but our motivation shifts, as well. Where once we asked, "what can I get?" we now ask, "what can I give?" Quite simply, if we are living with a "me, me!" attitude, we are missing the Melchizedek priesthood. The priesthood is about others and about being a blessing to others. It is about blessing God and blessing people. The wonder of this is, that we end up feeling blessed! Indeed, as Jesus said, "it is more blessed to give than to receive!" (Acts 20:35). This is what God's kingdom is all about. If you have not yet caught hold of this mystery and this wonderful feeling, you can! I think feelings are a gift from God. He created us to have feelings. The Bible records that even God has feelings. We are also to be people of the Word, obeying the Word of God. But, we know it is God's will for us to have more than just the letter of the Law. It is okay to feel something. It's okay to have some passion about living. To live life without that sense of blessing in the heart is to not live at all.

Years ago there was a hurricane, called Mitch, that devastated the northern coast of Honduras. We had established relationships with churches and with pastors of a people group there, called the Garifuna. We cried when we saw on the television the devastation that had been brought to the coast. It was in our heart to help and to bless. A team flew down from my church, including myself, with the purpose to help and to bless God's people. We came upon the house of a pastor that we knew. Inside were 17 pastors. They were discussing the need of their churches

and of themselves for finances. I said "Brothers we are here to help you, the Lord has sent us to bring a blessing to you. This blessing is not from us, the Lord is giving it to you." We inquired how many months that they were without salaries and learned it was two months. We also discovered that two church buildings had had their roofs blown off in the high winds. We gave them money to pay for two new roofs. What a blessing, as we poured out ourselves into that ministry in Honduras. But, we were so blessed ourselves! And that is the point! If you as a Christian believer, and have never experienced something like this, you must! It is phenomenal! Talk about a feeling! There is nothing like this feeling in all of the world! More than anything else, the sense you will get is, this is my "Calling and this is my Blessing. I am set apart for this Purpose."

### Going on to Perfection

So, then, in Hebrews chapter 7, the writer is admonishing the Hebrew Christians to move on to telios or completion, to move from that which was temporary to that which is complete, perfect, and permanent. Once Christ had come, the incomplete, that is, the Law and the Levitical priesthood, was no longer effective or necessary. He is saying, "so leave it behind and let us move on to that which is perfect and complete." Having said that, the writer then spends the next two chapters speaking of Melchizedek and the priesthood. The implication is that this is the telios to

which God is calling them. If you will, this is God's "perfect priesthood." If someone were to read these verses they would assume that the going on to perfection speaks to the individual about individual perfection. Being perfect as a believer in Jesus Christ. But that is not the context. The writer is trying to teach Hebrew Christians a simple thought, a paradigm shift, if you like. It is a situation that Gentile Christians in the 21st century do not have to deal with. We have not been programmed in the way that the first century Christian Hebrews were. As Gentile Christians, we should already know that we are not to adopt a Levitical priesthood. But for Hebrew Christians of that era, what he is saying is revolutionary thinking. It went against everything in their culture, everything in their religion, and everything in their teachings up to that point. It was a new day! We do not have to deal with this because we have been told from the beginning that God has made us believers, a nation of royal priests. Regardless of our ethnic background, our language, or our culture, we are and have been made a new nation, a nation of priests! The Old Testament priesthood of Levi had a beginning and an ending. But we are of the order of Melchizedek, and this order was from the beginning and it has no end. This is the meaning of that passage. The priesthood of New Testament believers is a complete, finished and a "perfect priesthood." Glory to God for what He has done!

## Motivated to Bless

God is constantly searching the earth. His Eyes are on the poor and those in need. He is searching for a vessel, a priest, if you will, to bring blessings through their hands, labors and hearts. One day I had a dream. I was on the island called Key West off the coast of Florida. I was instructed by the Lord to go to the southern part of the island. There I would meet a homeless man. I was told to pray for him and to bless him. I was to tell him that God had not forgotten him. The dream was heavy on my heart. Two weeks later, I obeyed what God was telling me. I flew down from Tulsa, Oklahoma to Key West Florida, arriving in the evening. The next morning I drove to the southern beach of the island. I walked up and down the beach searching for a homeless man. I felt like a fool as I walked the beach for 45 min. unsuccessfully. Then suddenly, I looked and saw an older man with a long beard and old clothes sitting under a tree. He had a small folded up, paperbag. I walked up to him and explained to him who I was (a pastor) and that God has given me a dream about him. I told him that God had not forgotten him, and I asked if I could pray for him. He agreed and bowed his head in a simple prayer. I also blessed him with a \$20 bill and told him to get something good to eat. I knew that I had fulfilled my purpose, my calling, and it also was a blessing to me!

When Abram gave the tithe to Melchizedek, symbolically, something very interesting happened. Let us assume that whoever is greater in priesthood gets the tithes. If this is the case, when Abram gave the tithe of Melchizedek, it was

saying that Melchizedek was greater than he. And as Hebrews 7:7 says, "Now the more important person blesses the less important person"(NCV). Now, in the loins of Abram was the seed of Levi, the father of the Levitical tribe and priesthood. Thus, it can be said that Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek, showing the supremacy of Melchizedek's priesthood over the Levitical priesthood. The priesthood of Melchizedek was of greater significance than the Levitical priesthood and he did the blessing. But more than this is the fact that the two priesthoods differ in their very nature. The Levitical priesthood is all about service. The people were required to go to the temple where the priest would offer up their sacrifices. He served as an intermediary, a mediator as was necessary for service. Contrary to this, Melchizedek priesthood, which is the greater priesthood, is a priesthood of blessing. This priesthood is motivated to bless. It is not just: "I'm serving! I'm serving God! It's tough! I'm a priest!" There is a deeper purpose of this priesthood. We have been called to this order of priesthood. And what a change this lifestyle provides! Imagine taking your finances and finding ways of giving. Imagine expending your energy to cross oceans and continents to give to those who are less fortunate. Imagine praying for somebody when it's inconvenient, and it takes you out of your way and comfort zone. What charge you should get being a blessing like this! There's nothing like this feeling in the whole world. Being a blessing is what we were created for.

## No Beginning and No End

This wonderful lifestyle to which we have been called to is a "forever" priesthood "Thou art a priest forever," says Psalms 110. Taken out of context, the notion that Melchizedek did not have a beginning nor an end can be very confusing. The same is true with the idea that Melchizedek had no father or mother. This is a discussion about priesthood, and the Hebrew Christians understood what the writer meant by statements of that sort. In fact, in our Bibles this letter to the Hebrews has 13 chapters, and in 11 of these chapters the word priest, priests and priesthood can be found. The point of this is, that this letter to the Hebrews entirely has the theme of priesthood in it. They understood that a person could be a priest under the Law only if he were of the lineage of the tribe of Levi. They also understood that, whereas the Levitical priest had a beginning as a priest through his parents, Melchizedek did not, and whereas Levitical priesthood ended when the nation was scattered and when the Law no longer held sway, that the Melchizedek order of priests continues. For us today, Jesus is our forerunner in this Melchizedek priesthood. He has made us a nation of Melchizedek-type priests. This is the nature of the priesthood of all believers in Jesus Christ. In a similar sense, tithing remains. It did not come on the scene with the Law, it existed before a Levitical priesthood was instituted. It existed before the Law was given. It is an eternal principle intended to bless. Yes, it is true that some leaders have manipulated congregations

and believers in order to get money. There have been excesses. But what a wonderful healing, that comes to us as we learn our true calling and our blessing is to bless others, that is how we fulfill our priestly calling.

### No Turning Back

Why would we ever want to revert to a Levitical-type priesthood? Why would we ever want to be like those who serve God for the purpose of personal gain? Why would we want to deny the work of Christ and refuse the place to which He has called us? When the biblical truths of the priesthood of all believers was restored to the church during the Reformation Age, the institutional church severely persecuted the proponents of this teaching. Torture and death sentences were the weapons of control against any and all who dare to believe and practice such a belief. Yet in the face of such terror, thousands did believe and pay the utmost price for the truth that Jesus came to model and that we are called to emulate Him. God the Father said that Christ was a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. A priest that was called to bless God and to bless others. In Fox's Book of Martyrs, it tells of the saints of the Reformation who were experiencing unspeakable torture and martyrdom for their beliefs in the biblical teaching of the priesthood of all believers!

- They were placed in a vice. Forcing the most filthy things down the throat, by which many were choked. Tying ropes around the head so tightly that the blood rushed out of the eyes, nose, ears, and the mouth... Hanging Protestants up by their legs, with their heads over a fire... Baking many in hot ovens... Hanging, roasting, stabbing, frying, racking, ravishing, ripping open, breaking the bones, rasping of the flesh, tearing with wild horses, drowning, strangling, burning, roiling, crucify... Enormous cruelties.

After all that they have won for us, will we let this vital truth be lost? What we do not value, we lose. How about you? How about me? Are we walking in this truth? It's not hard to understand. It is about blessing God and blessing people. It cannot be more simple than this. It's *Our Calling* and *Our Blessing*. And when we do this, all things are taken care of for us. As we seek first God's kingdom which is His way of being and doing, he takes care of us! That is the promise of God. Regardless of our present circumstances, we can begin to be a Melchizedek priesthood right now. If we are believers in Jesus Christ then we are called to bless God. If we are believers in Jesus Christ then we are a priesthood that is called to bless people. That is our part. That's what we can do, starting today. And God will do his part. You can count on that! So there is no turning back to an old way of living. There is no turning back to a selfish lifestyle. When we walk in *Our Calling* and know that *Our Blessing* is given



for others and for God, we are for sure the happiest people on the face of the earth!

### About the author

Jim and his wife Tondi have been pastors for over 40 years in Minnesota, Oklahoma, now in Foley, South Baldwin in Alabama and even in Belize Central America and Santiago, Chile, South America. Jim has planted 6 churches.

Jim, an ardent student of history, earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in History at Long Island University, the C.W. Post campus in Brookville, New York. He also earned a Masters degree in Theology at Newburgh Theological Seminary in Newburgh, Indiana.

Jim has traveled extensively speaking in churches and in schools in Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Honduras, Belize, Canada, England, Australia, and Malaysia.

Jim and Tondi serve on the Core Team USA for Harvest Alliance. Harvest Alliance is a global family birthed in revival from the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that has been sweeping the nations. We are a 'Word and Spirit' relational and apostolic family of local churches and ministries from many nations and part of the worldwide Body of Christ in all its beauty and form. They are called to support, encourage and create an environment for

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