***Paul's Anguish for the Jews, No. 4
Romans 9:1-5
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**False Feelings of Safety in Numbers**

It is a fact of human nature that people are willing to believe something simply because large numbers of people accept an idea as being true. There may not be a shred of evidence for an idea, and there may even be much that contradicts that idea. But if it is accepted by a large number of people, then people are willing to believe it.

Evolution is such an idea. Evolution has no scientific proof whatsoever, but evolution has a huge following of the unbelieving intellectual world behind it. And because large numbers of people believe in evolution, others are willing to accept it as well. The biblical rules for the use of sex are widely discarded simply because most people in our day do not believe that what the Bible says about that must be absolutely obeyed. Salvation only through Jesus Christ is rejected by most people today. They say that that is not the only way to heaven, and so the average person believes it.

Religious organizations such as the Roman Catholic Church are viewed as being the absolute voice of God on this earth because millions of people believe it, and certainly millions of people could not be wrong on that subject. The Bible is treated as a book which is filled with human error and therefore not absolutely binding on human beings. They believe this because most people believe this about the Bible. Those who believe what the Bible teaches in spite of widespread rejection of it are called arrogant to think that they are right and that millions are wrong.

You will remember that this was the very line of argument which was brought to Martin Luther of the Diet of Worms when the interrogator says, "Martin, are you willing to stand here and say that all of the preceding teachers of the church have been wrong throughout all the centuries, that all the Catholic doctors have been in error, and that you - a small, Augustinian monk in an insignificant place on the world - are right?" And that is the attack which is made today. It was Satan speaking at that Diet of Worms. It is Satan speaking to people today. You should be aware of that, that the argument that millions cannot be wrong is a totally salacious argument, because the truth is that millions of people today are wrong about God. And millions of people are going to find, to their eternal distress, how wrong they are indeed.

One can easily imagine the kinds of derogatory names and remarks that were directed toward Noah and his family of believers during the 120 years that he preached the Word of God to them. And he said, "This is the final authority. This is the real truth." You can imagine those people, all of those who uniformly rejected what he had to say, what they said about Noah. The pre-flood society undoubtedly took comfort in the fact that what Noah condemned was believed by everyone else, and therefore, what everyone else believed and what everyone else practiced was the standard of what was the truth - not what this guy building this huge boat away from any body of water had to say. People take comfort in being part of the herd and blindly follow the pack over the cliff into hell without questioning the truth of what those are saying whom they are following.

The Apostle Paul was faced with this same attitude on the part of the Jews toward the Lord Jesus Christ, and it brought him great grief. The Jews of Paul's day in mass blindly followed the stampede of their nation led by their rabbis to their eternal doom. The majority of Jews today are still wrong about Jesus Christ, but the individual Jew is simply following the crowd in his synagogue because he thinks there is safety and truth in numbers. And there is neither safety nor truth in numbers. Do not fall for that mistake.

I heard a Seventh Day Adventist on television this morning who was preaching a lot that was true but who made the remark that forty million people who worship on Saturday, the Sabbath day, cannot be wrong. See what we're talking about? He was arguing for going to church on Saturday. Forty million people who worship on the Sabbath day in fulfillment of the Mosaic Law which was given to us (which it was not given to us). But forty million people cannot be wrong. And I yelled at the television, "You better read the story of Noah again, fellow!" And he looked at me and said, "Oh yeah!" [Laughter.] I mean, this can be really wild! If the whole herd believes it, then it's got to be true. You must be on your guard against that.

This is the way Christians do, you know, in the local congregation, when they want to get a stir of a cause of some kind. They'll sound off and say, "And I'm not the only one!" And I say, "Well, there are other dummies besides you then, aren't there?" Because they think that if they can prove that there's a herd out there, they must be right in their viewpoint. While there is not truth in safety in numbers relative to how to go to heaven, neither is it concerning to Christian life. And many of you are taking comfort from time to time that there are other people in substantial number who take your same attitude, that you must be right. That God must think what that vast number that you are associated with think. But if they do not think what the Bible has to say, then they're out of step with God. Never forget Noah and his society.

Paul was especially saddened by the Jews' rejection of Jesus Christ in view of the honored place that they held with God as Israelites. Israelites possess special privileges with God which were not enjoyed by Gentile nations. Theirs was the adoption, Paul points out. The nation adopted by God as His special people on earth. That was not true of any other nation on earth. Theirs was the glory, the presence of God among them, as seen by the visible Shekinah glory of God. Theirs were the covenants, the Abrahamic covenant and subsequent explanatory covenants giving external blessings and promises to the Jews. Theirs was the Mosaic Law, the specific guidelines from God for the Jews in their moral, civil, and religious life. Tremendous advantages.

**The Israelite's Advantage of Service**

And then, Paul goes on in Romans 9:4, when he adds another advantage to the Jews, and that is that theirs was the service. The word "service" looks like this in the Greek language. It's the Greek word "latreia." This word is used of sacred service to God. It's the kind of service that's referred to in Romans 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Taking your physical body, making it a sacrifice in God's service: that is sacred work for God.

Here, it refers specifically to the Old Testament Jewish Tabernacle and the temple religious ministry. In Hebrews 9:1, we read, "Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and an earthly sanctuary." And that is precisely what Paul is referring to here. The Mosaic Law provided a series of rituals and of earthly ordinances of serving God, of worshipping God, and it had an earthly building - a tabernacle, a sacred place - in which to perform these services. So, Paul says, "To them was the service of God." "Of God," is not in the Greek; it simply says, "To the service."

The Old Testament temple rituals portrayed the person and the work of Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God's sacrifice for the sins of the world. And the Jews were not entirely ignorant of the significance of these services. When they went through these rituals, they knew that these rituals portrayed something. They were visual aids, and they did understand what these visual aids were portraying. It's important that we do not try to pass them off as being ignorant people who were simply going through motions. Some of them did. Some of them lost sight of what the ritual represented, but the Jews were given a ceremony, and they were told what it means.

So, they understood why they were doing certain things. They followed an order of ritual revealed to them by God, and the worship system of Israel was designed to direct their minds toward Jesus Christ and for their acceptance by Him in heaven - a Savior who was yet to come.

But, the Jews made the fatal mistake of thinking that performing their religious rituals would take them to heaven, so they rejected Jesus who John 14:6 says is the only Way to heaven. For that reason, we say that no Jew today who rejects Jesus Christ - no matter how religious he is, no matter how many of the Hebrew festivals he observes, no matter how many of the ritualistic services of circumcision or whatever he performs that he can still do of the Mosaic system - none of that counts if he has rejected Jesus Christ.

Now, at the heart of this marvelous service (and this is what of Paul, the Apostle Paul) is the fact that they perform certain sacrifices. In Leviticus chapters 1-7, God lays out five specific sacrifices which tell the whole story. And the Jews were to go through the ritual of these sacrifices, according to certain conditions, and by certain procedures. And Paul, when he says, "Theirs was the 'latreia,'" the service, is actually saying, "Theirs was all this sacrificial system with everything that it was telling them." So that anybody with half a brain could see Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of all of these rituals. And they should have immediately spotted that He was the One. Instead, they rejected him.

**The Five Sacrifices of the Mosaic Law**

There were five sacrifices provided for their worship system. These sacrifices could only be offered to God through the Levitical priesthood. Not everyone was a priest under the Old Testament order. The service of sacrifices of the Mosaic Law were given only to the Jewish nation. They were not given to Gentiles or to the church. These Old Testament sacrifices were not the means of salvation; they were only a pictorial salvation to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. And we ought to look them over just briefly so that you'll fully appreciate the word "latreia."

There were, first of all, what the Bible refers to as voluntary sacrifices, or voluntary offerings. There were three of them. These voluntary ones, because of what they represented, were described as a sweet favor offering to God. They were a fragrant odor to Him when they were performed. He was so pleased and delighted to have people do these.

The first of the voluntary offerings was called the burnt offering. In the burnt offering sacrifice, an animal was used from the herd, a bullock (that is, a male ox) or from the flock (a sheep or a goat), or from a bird (a turtle dove or a pigeon). The burnt offering portrayed the concept of a perfect, male substitute (these animals had to be male), a perfect male substitute sacrificed in payment for another's sin. That's what the burnt offering represented. A perfect animal, a male animal given in sacrifice for another's sin. Jesus Christ was obviously clearly portrayed in this as coming on the cross to do this for the Jewish people.

The worshiper laid his on the animal to identify the animal with his sins, and this clearly portrayed the imputation of the sins of the world to Jesus Christ on the cross. The worshipper, then, killed the animal by cutting its throat in order to shed its blood, which clearly portrayed the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross in the process of His crucifixion. The priest, then, took the blood and sprinkled it on the altar. The animal was burned on the altar depicting God's judgment against sin which clearly portrayed Jesus Christ bearing God's judgment for the sins of mankind. The fire in the Bible, you will remember, symbolizes divine holiness, which punishes sin.

This offering was a sweet odor to God the Father, because it portrayed the substitutionary sacrifice of His sinless Son Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God whom the Jews rejected. Every time a burnt offering was a made, it told the Jews all of these things about a Savior that God was going to send. And when Jesus Christ came, they couldn't make the connection, and they rejected Him. This is why Paul was grieved that in spite of the service of the sacrifice, they rejected the one who fulfilled that sacrificial system.

The second voluntary offering, which was also a sweet savor is called a meal offering. Meal offering was a non-blood offering which portrayed the sinlessness of Jesus Christ, the final Lamb of God. It was an offering of fine flour, very carefully ground, very carefully processed so that it was the finest flour to portray the evenness of the humanity of Jesus Christ, the fineness indicating His sinlessness. There was no coarse, old sin nature in Jesus Christ. To this offering was added oil. Oil, representing in the Bible God the Holy Spirit, was poured over the fine flour indicating, symbolizing that the Holy Spirit sustained and empowered the humanity of Jesus Christ on the earth, which was such an enormous comfort and encouragement to us.

We, in our humanity needing the same world and Satan's system that Jesus Christ did, we needing it in the capacity that He had - God the Holy Spirit - through an intelligently educated Christian in the Word of God has the capacity to meet Satan. The Christian who is not educated in the Word of God has very limited access to the power of God the Holy Spirit. But here, Jesus Christ was fully permeated with the power of the Holy Spirit, and this was symbolized by pouring this oil over the fine flour. To it was then added an aromatic scent, the Frankincense, which was poured over this mixture, symbolizing the fragrance of the sinless humanity of Jesus Christ. The holiness of Jesus Christ, the Godman, was such a sweet savor to God the Father.

These elements of the meal offering (the fine flour, the oil, the Frankincense), interestingly enough, are all represented at the water baptism of Jesus Christ. The fine flour was there in the sinless person of Jesus Christ who was standing in the water. The oil was present, representing the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove that descended. And then the Frankincense, the fragrant aroma, was expressed by the voice of God the Father from heaven declaring that this was His Son in whom He was well pleased. And so, the water baptism of Jesus Christ was a fulfillment of the meal offering for any Jew who was sensitive to make the connection.

This meal offering mixture is brought to the priest who took part of it and burned it on the altar. He burned it as a memorial of the sinlessness of the Lamb of God who was to come in the future. This portrayed approaching a holy God for salvation then on the merit of a sinless Messiah, someone who was more than human, someone who is a Godman, which is the basis of satisfying the justice of God. This meal offering was a sweet aroma to the Father, signifying the sinless perfection of His Son, and He was pleased in that. But, the Jews were not pleased in it. The rejected the sinless Jesus Christ.

"Well," you say, "did they know it? Did they realize that He was that?" Well, He said that on more than one occasion to them. He told them. He challenged them. "Can you prove anything evil about me? Do it!" And He didn't do it in private, where nobody could hear and somebody could think of something. He did it in front of vast crowds all the time, and directly to the religious who were the most competent to judge. He challenged them, "Show me where I have broken the Mosaic Law. Show me where one of the 613 rules of the Mosaic Law has been violated by Me." And they were always silent. So, the Jews were very much at fault to have rejected, to have been deliberately blinded to the sinlessness of this person who is portrayed in this sinlessness every time they brought a meal offering.

As we will do tonight in our evening service, the Lord's Supper of Christianity is a memorial of what Jesus Christ did for sinners as the sinless One. The meal offering was the memorial to the sinlessness of Jesus Christ as the final Lamb of God. The New Testament memorial was what He did as the sinless one. So, there's a connection between the meal offering and the Lord's Supper.

There was, of course, specifically no leaven permitted in the meal offering. They must not add yeast to it, because yeast was a symbol of evil in the Bible, and the human nature of Jesus Christ was free from all sin. He did not have a sin nature. A special meal offering was made in connection with the celebration of the feast of firstfruits. Firstfruits came on the Sunday following the Passover, and it symbolized the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

See, this special meal offering held in connection with the Feast of the Firstfruits celebrating the resurrection of the slain, coming Savior, to this meal offering was added salt. The other meal offerings did not have salt. They had all of the Frankincense. This one added salt, and salt symbolizes, as you know, preservation. And this was a symbol of preservation of the sinner in eternal life that Jesus Christ gave to them. To those who taste of Jesus Christ in faith, He is the preserver forever in their salvation. The Jews looked at all this, and they never made the connection. Paul says, "I don't understand it. The meal offering that they bring so often, that they know so well, that portrays so much about this Savior and that Jesus Christ so clearly fulfills, they did not understand."

Then there was a third voluntary offering, and that was called the peace offering, or you might call it the fellowship offering. This also was a sweet savor offering that God took great delight in. This offering portrayed the fact of reconciliation of the sinner with God, the removal of the barrier between God and man. You will remember that the word "reconciliation" means, "adjustment to a standard." A sinner has to be adjusted to God's standard of absolute righteousness, or he couldn't go to heaven. So, all of us must have reconciliation if we are to go to heaven. We have to have absolute righteousness so we can match ourselves up to God's standard. This stresses, therefore, the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross as the basis for all fellowship with God and for all personal wellbeing.

With the peace offering there was portrayed the sinner's adjustment to God's standard of absolute righteousness through the imputation to him of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. And so, peace is established between God and man. The peace offering, of course, stressed the finished work of Jesus Christ, to which no human work could be or needed to be added.

The peace offering symbolized what the Apostle Paul expressed in 2 Corinthians 5:20-21, when he said, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we beg you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God [Get adjusted to His absolute standard. And here's how you do it.]. For He hath made Him to be sin Who knew no sin to be sin for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

Reconciliation is accepting by imputation to your credit the absolute righteousness of Jesus Christ who took your sin on Himself. Animals from the herd or flock were taken for this peace offering. In this case, they could be either male or female. The male animals, representing Christ in authority choosing to die for the sin of the world. A female animal, representing Christ in subjection to the will of His Father calling upon Him to die. So, the reconciliation picture, interestingly enough, uses either a male or a female animal, conveying both these qualities in the Lord.

In this case, again, the offerer laid his hands on the animal, symbolizing the imputation of his son on the animal. The offerer then killed the animal by cutting its throat. He sprinkled the blood around the brazen altar. The animal was burned on the altar, and then part of it was eaten by the priest, and part of it was eaten by the worshipper, symbolizing fellowship between God and man, because reconciliation had been established. The priest, you see, representing God. The worshipper, representing himself. And the common eating of the sacrifice representing that God and man were on now terms of peace.

If you sat down in Biblical times and ate with somebody, it was a symbol of peace and fellowship. Of course, the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled a picture of the peace offering by establishing peace with God in terms of eternal fellowship and peace of God in terms of temporal fellowship. The Jews rejected both the peace with God in eternal fellowship and the peace of God in temporal fellowship. These were the voluntary.

There were two more offerings that God gave which is behind Paul's thinking in terms of the service that the Jews had which should have directed them to Christ. These are non-voluntary offerings, and these are non-sweet savor to God. There were two of them.

Number one was called the sin offering. The purpose of the sin offering was to cover the sin that a person did in ignorance. Sins of ignorance. You didn't mean to sin. It wasn't willful. You weren't instructed. You didn't make the connection. It wasn't a deliberate sin, but you discovered that you have sinned. Or, you may have sinned and not even have been aware of it. This dealt with the restoration, then, you see, to what we call the inner circle of fellowship. The sin offering was to bring you back in here to the inner circle of temporal fellowship. You could not leave the circle of eternal fellowship in the Old Testament any more than you can in the New Testament.

In 1 John 1:9 that tell us as Christians how to come back into temporal fellowship. When we sin and don't mean to sin (our sins of ignorance), those sins of ignorance are described in 1 John 1:9 by the words "all unrighteousness." "If we confess our sins [our known, deliberate sins], He is faithful and just to forgive us our [known, deliberate] sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "All unrighteousness" is what the sin offering dealt with. It was the sins of ignorance.

This offering stressed a very distinct point that you and I are morally guilty for our sins of ignorance. God does not say, "Well, you didn't know it was wrong, so we're not going to count it." Whether you know it's wrong or not, it's counted. Whether you know this is breaking your fellowship or not, it's counted. God brings it eventually to where these things are brought to our attention, and in the New Testament, you see, we have this covering here when you confess your known sins, God says He takes care of your unknown sin as well.

Now, the Jews have been taught that God's justice demanded payment for the penalty of all sins before God could forgive them. And this was done for them by the Lord Jesus Christ. Whether we know we are sinning or not, we have violated God's righteousness, and we have to pay the price. The sin offering is therefore a marvelous provision to maintain the day-by-day walk of the Jews with God.

This offering required, however, different provisions for different categories of people. It was considerably more serious for a priest to get out of temporal fellowship than it was for other people. God looked upon that as quite a very serious breach. And it was another thing when the nation as a whole stepped out of line of the will of God. And it was another thing when you were a ruler, a civil authority, and you stepped out of temporal fellowship, and if you were just an ordinary person, that was another category.

So, in the Mosaic Law, the sin offering had these categories for priests, for the nation as a whole, for rulers, and people. And they had variations for what you would sacrifice in the procedure. In general, you would sacrifice a bullock. The bullock was the highest kind. This is what a priest would have to sacrifice, the most expensive kind of offering. The blood of the animal was sprinkled seven times toward the veil in the holy place.

Remember in the temple in the Tabernacle, the basic structure was like this. This was the Holy of Holies, and nobody went in there except the High Priest once a year on the Day of Atonement. And this was called the holy place, and the priest came into here every day. And it was here against this veil that separated which represented, Hebrews tells us, the body of Jesus Christ. And through that body, we get into heaven through the sacrifice that that body is used to make. The priest would take this blood for the sin offering, and he would sprinkle it on this veil. And he would sprinkle it seven times, seven being the number of perfection. That's demonstrating a perfect provision of access to God through the blood of Jesus Christ - not the provision to be saved. You're already in the temple Tabernacle area, but to maintain your fellowship for sins of ignorance.

The blood, furthermore, was smeared on the horns of the altar of incense, which stood right here, and it had horns, and smoke went up from the incense, which is burned, and the Bible tells us that that incense, that smoke, represents the blood of the saints. And that blood was smeared on the horns of this altar of incense which signified prayers to God which told them that when you're not in temporal fellowship, you're wasting your time trying to pray. So that, when they brought the blood to cover their sins of ignorance, it was not only sprinkled against the veil to demonstrate that the sin had already been paid for, but it was even smeared on that altar of incense to indicate that they now had access to talk to God again.

The blood was furthermore poured out on the ground at the base of the basin altar, which was outside here in the courtyard, and the blood was sprinkled out here around the base of the altar on the ground, which signified the basis of the atonement and the fellowship to be the cross of Jesus Christ, which He poured out on the cross into the ground.

The fat and the kidneys of the bullock were burned on the altar, but the rest of the animal was dumped outside of the campground, or outside of the city of Jerusalem. And there, it was burned, symbolizing the picture of Jesus Christ dying outside of the city of Jerusalem, bearing the sins of the world.

Now, you and I, we talk about these procedures, and we have to think them through, because we're not Jews, and we're not used to doing this. And we have to learn them. But these Jews know these back and forth. They did these all these all the time. And for them to stand there and watch Jesus Christ dripping His blood off that cross outside of the city of Jerusalem into the ground dying as a man they knew that they could bring no accusation against, perfectly demonstrating, perfectly fulfilling this sin offering, it is a wonder to the Apostle Paul that they did not understand that here indeed was the true Messiah of God who is bearing the sins of the world. Instead, they simply rejected the provision for their temporal fellowship, and, because of that, they ultimately lost out the national blessing, as well.

There was a second non-voluntary offering that you had to bring, and the final one of the five. And that is the trespass offering. This was, again, a non-sweet savor offering to God. This also had to do with restoration to temporal fellowship, but this covered deliberate, willful sins - the sins that were not of ignorance, the sins that you knew you were doing, the sins of violating the moral code that you knew were violating the moral code, where you deliberately chose to do evil.

Now, that was a different picture, and that was dealt with differently. The Jew would come, and he would to confess to God his willful sinning, and then he made the trespass offering, symbolizing the basis of his restoration to fellowship, this symbolizing the death of Jesus Christ, obviously. An animal was used here again - male or female - a lamb or a goat, or two turtle doves or pigeons, or even fine flour if you're a really poor person. But when he brought the fine flour this time, you didn't put oil in it, and you didn't put Frankincense. It was not a sweet savor offering to God. It was not a fragrance. When the Jew deliberately broke the rules and needed to use the trespass offering, it was not something that was pleasing to God.

The trespass offering, furthermore, was accompanied by restitution for the injury that you had done to others. If you had stolen somebody's property, you returned his property before you came around making the trespass offering. You knew you shouldn't have taken it. You stole it. You took it from him. You brought it back, and you paid back a certain percentage more for the loss that you had caused the person. There was restitution that was associated with the trespass offering.

It wasn't just going, say, "Oh, God, I stole a million dollars from this man. I am really sorry, and I shouldn't do it, but I'll give ten percent. I will tithe from it." And then, you go and live high on the hog over the money you stole. "Oh God, this man made me this loan, and I've been beating him out of paying it back, but I'm going to give you ten percent of what I'm beating him out of." First, you return the money, then you paid your penalty to him, and then you brought your trespass offering.

You didn't play loose at all with the Old Testament. It was a very serious business. The Jews learned that they were responsible for their sins when they chose to commit their sins. God exercises judgment on those sins. Woe betide the Jew who is out of temporal fellowship by deliberate sinning and who did not bring the trespass offering. The house was going to come down around his ears; you could count on it. And that's why we should learn a lesson that when Christians today are deliberate sinners, and we are the victims of what they are doing, that we go very carefully, that we do not fall to the temptation of taking charge of giving those people what they deserve.

Because you can count on the fact that God will give them what they deserve. He will take care of the person who does not bring the trespass offering who is a Christian today, and today we bring the trespass offering by 1 John 1:9 confession. The Jews rejected the Savior Jesus Christ who gave them a way back into temporal fellowship with the Father after deliberate sinning, and they lost it all. The Apostle Paul said, "I can't understand it. These offerings so clearly portray this Savior, and they reject Him."

All of this service was, of course, performed by the Jewish priesthood. They were the only ones who had access to God. So, that's also in the word "latreia," when he said they had the service. They had a way of getting to God. If you were one of the pagan people, you had no way of getting to God. The Gentiles had no way of approaching God; only the Aaronic priesthood could go to God. And if you were a Jew, you couldn't go to God by yourself; you couldn't be heard. You had to go to Him. You didn't make your own sacrifices; you had to go to the priest. He was appointed by God to represent the Jewish people before God. He was appointed to offer sacrifices for the worshippers. He was appointed to intercede for them. He was the channel to God.

The Jews, thus, through their divinely-appointed priesthood did have access to the living, sovereign God. They did have a way of getting information. They did have a way of correcting the problems. They did have a way of correcting big sins of ignorance, big since of non-ignorance. They had a way of establishing and maintaining the walk with God, because they had a way of getting to God. The rest of the world did not.

The Apostle Paul shook his head. This is what he meant. He said, "I cannot understand this. These people who had the service who gave them access to God should have been so ignorant about the one, the supreme, the final Lamb of God, Jesus Christ." The Lord Jesus Christ came to the Jews, in fact, as their final High Priest to carry them to God, and they rejected Him. And there is no one else who is going to come to the Jews.

You see, the high priest was the ultimate avenue to God. Only he could do certain things for the nation, like on the great Day of Atonement. Only he could go around the veil into the Holy of Holies and sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat, and so on, where God's brilliant Shekinah glory dwelt. But, the Jews rejected the High Priest Jesus Christ, and no one else was to come.

You may remember that the book of Hebrews tell us that the Lord Jesus Christ was of a different priestly order than that of the Aaronic priesthood. The Lord Jesus Christ came from the order of Melchizedek. The Melchizedek priesthood was superior to the Aaronic priesthood. Abraham subjected himself to the Melchizedek priesthood. "And when Abraham as a representative of the Jewish nation subjected himself to the Melchizedek priesthood, then the Aaronic priesthood," God said, "is inferior to the Melchizedek priesthood."

Christians - now get this - Christians, because we are in Christ are of the order of the Melchizedek priesthood. We are of the most supreme priesthood on the face of the earth. And because we Christians are in Christ, who is the King, we are told by the Apostle Peter that we are a royal priesthood. So that, today, Christians join Jesus Christ as part of the Melchizedek priesthood, and we too make intercession for people. We don't light incense anymore symbolically sending up the smoke of prayers. We do make prayers for people, and they make a difference. Our prayers make a difference when we offer them up in behalf of ourselves and behalf of others in a condition of temporal fellowship. Every Christian, furthermore, is now a priest today - men and women alike.

And each of us represents ourselves privately, therefore, before God. What you do with your life is your own business. What you do with your life is your own business as a Christian. What you do with your life that creates a problem for us as a local church organization because our business, too. But where it does not come into the conflict of our local church organization or some local church ministry, we'll keep our nose out of your business and how you do things. But when you do things that begins to come into conflict with conduct of our ministry, then we will knock heads with you, and we will call you to task, because then, you do become our business. And you have now overstepped the bounds of the privacy of your priesthood.

But the Jew had no such access to God. We Christians are the fulfillment of what the Jew could have had. We are the fulfillment of having a direct access to God where we represent ourselves privately before Him.

And indeed, the Bible makes it very clear we will account for our performance as priests. Don't make any mistakes about that. You go acting stupid. You forget to read the book of Proverbs. You don't act upon the principles of wisdom that it lays out there. You don't teach your kids the principles of wisdom. They get hurt. It bungles up their priesthood. They'll account for it. You'll account for it. How we handle this privacy - it's great to have that freedom. It's great to have our own business. It's great to be able to go to God directly. At the same time, it carries a very serious penalty if we are careless with it, because we are going to account for the Lord for it.

The specialized priesthood, therefore, that are in existence today, such as the Roman Catholic Church, and many Reformation groups, do the same thing. You want to come to God? We have an altar up here in the church; this is where you come to. Why do churches have altars? Because they're still acting like they're under the Mosaic Law system.

At least the Seventh Day Adventists are consistent. They say the Mosaic Law applies to us. So, they circumcise their male boys, and they go to church on Saturdays, and the whole bit. But the Reformation churches are picky, picky. They're very choosy, and they have their altar. They love their robes, and they like the preacher up there in the robes. And they light the candles, and they like to pass the altar. And I, you know, once in a while, I'm in one of these Protestant churches that when I visit other places, and I see Protestants - not Catholics - walking by their altar and genuflecting, as if there was something sacred and holy up there. At least the Catholics say they've got Jesus Christ in a box there that they've turned from bread into His body, so at least there's something to bow down there to that's realistic.

But, but this business of specialized priesthood such as the Catholics have and some of the Reformation churches have, so if you want to go to God, you go through this system - this is a blasphemy. It's a fraud of Satan to enslave mankind to himself. In the Old Testament, you were enslaved to some human element that through which you had to go.

"How sad," Paul says, "that Jesus Christ came to free you from that kind of restrictive access to God, and God even showed it to them, because the veil represented the access to God." And you know what happened when Jesus put His head down in death, God's finger reached up there, and it ripped that veil from top to bottom and threw it open. And the priests grabbed their hair, tore it out, ripped their clothes in horror because there before their eyes, they saw the mercy seat. They saw everything in the Holy of Holies that nobody was supposed to look at.

But they didn't even have enough sense to notice that they didn't die, so something must have changed. Because anybody else who looked in there died on the spot. And that's why the priests had those bells, the high priests had those bells on the bottom of his robe, so that as long as the bells would jangle, jangle, jangle, jangle, jangle, they'd know that the bells were still going, he was still alive. Those bells stopped, they know he had made a mistake and he had died back there.

This is what Paul, the Apostle Paul, he says, "I cannot believe this. Christians are a royal priesthood because they belong to the royal family of God, and Jesus Christ became. (the Jews rejected the superior priesthood of Jesus Christ) their final High Priest." And so, today, they are left with nothing. If you reject this Savior, you will be left with nothing as well.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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