

# Hebrews 8:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:

## Analysis

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If Christ were on earth, He 'would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law.' This counterfactual highlights the incompatibility of earthly Levitical priesthood with Christ's heavenly Melchizedekian priesthood. They can't coexist - the new replaces the old. Christ's priesthood is exercised in heaven (8:1), where He intercedes with the efficacy of His once-for-all sacrifice.

## Historical Context

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When Hebrews was written, the temple still stood (destroyed AD 70), and Levitical sacrifices continued. The author argues that this earthly system is obsolete (8:13), soon to disappear, rendered moot by Christ's superior priesthood.

## Related Passages

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**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

## Study Questions

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1. What does Christ's heavenly priesthood accomplish that earthly priesthood cannot?

2. How should the obsolescence of the old covenant system affect how you view religious rituals today?

## Interlinear Text

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εἰ	μὲν	γὰρ	ἥν	ἐπὶ	γῆς	οὐδὲν	ἄν	ἥν	ἱερέων
if	For	be	on	earth	not	he should	be	a priest	
G1487	G3303	G1063	G2258	G1909	G1093	G3761	G302	G2258	G2409
ὄντων			τῶν	ἱερέων	τῶν	προσφερόντων		κατὰ	
seeing that there are			G3588	a priest	G3588	that offer		according	
			G5607	G2409		G4374			G2596
τὸν	νόμον	τὰ	δῶρα·						
G3588	to the law	G3588	gifts						
	G3551		G1435						

## Additional Cross-References

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**Hebrews 5:1** (Parallel theme): For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:

**Numbers 18:5** (Parallel theme): And ye shall keep the charge of the sanctuary, and the charge of the altar: that there be no wrath any more upon the children of Israel.

**Numbers 16:40** (Parallel theme): To be a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the LORD; that he be not as Korah, and as his company: as the LORD said to him by the hand of Moses.