

Heb. 7 11-12 The “Perfection” of Jesus’ Priesthood

Last week, we looked at this the priest of Salem, the one who went out to meet Abraham after he rescued Lot and won a decisive battle against 4 kings. And this man, Melchizedek brought bread and wine and blessed Abraham. And Abraham give him a tenth of his spoils. And we saw that in every way, Melchizedek was greater than Abraham. Now, the author of Hebrews does not focus on Melchizedek as a man, but instead shows us that Melchizedek as a priest was DIFFERENT than the priests of Levites, and in fact vastly superior. His point is that the priesthood of Melchizedek is different than Aaron’s priesthood. In fact, his priesthood is not even in the same class. He is described as *“without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life . . .”*

I believe Melchizedek was a real man, of whom Abraham was acquainted. But the Bible does not speak of his parents, when he was born, or when he died. Why? Look at 7:3 again. **“He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life . . .”** Now, here is the key to answer my question WHY this priest? **“but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever.”** The Holy Spirit doesn’t speak about his genealogy because his priesthood is HERE in the Bible to picture the priesthood of another . . . Jesus Christ, who is the great high priest. In fact, the priesthood of Jesus is of a COMPLETELY DIFFERENT ORDER. And what is so cool about the Book of Hebrews is that the author always goes back to the OT to show how it points to Christ. In Heb. 5-7 he says Jesus is a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. Where does he get this? Look with me to Psalm 110:4. Here we have a Psalm about Israel’s future king. The entire Psalm is about this king. But, right in the middle of the Psalm, he says **“The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”** Now back to Hebrews 5:11: **“About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.”** Well, the “much to say” is cps. 7-10 about the priesthood of Jesus.

Look again at 8:1: **“Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven . . .”** There are a number of truths as to why Jesus’ priesthood is superior. But, for today I only have 1. And this will serve as an introduction to the entire topic. And it is: Jesus is superior because his priesthood is complete.

1. Jesus is superior because his priesthood is complete. In some way the priesthood of Christ “fulfills” or “completes” what was lacking in the Levitical priesthood. Look at vv. 11-12: **“Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron? For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well.”** Here, we see the word “perfection.” Look also at 7:19 **“(for the law made nothing perfect)”**. Finally, look at 7:28: **“For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect.”** This idea of “perfection” in the case of Christ’s priesthood is very important. It seems to me to be the author’s main point. But the meaning is so much deeper than our English word “perfect.” This word, translated as “perfect” is also translated as “fulfill” or “complete.” This is where I get our truth:

Jesus is superior because his priesthood is complete. In other words, the priesthood of Jesus “completes” or “fulfills” what has come before.

A good example might be our advances in technology through the years. Just think about the automobile alone. Since the invention of the wheel, particularly in transportation, look how far we’ve come. From pushing or pulling a cart, to attaching it to a horse, and then with Mr. Ford inventing the automobile, we are now moving to all different kinds of cars with all kinds of ways to make driving easier. I am amazed at the technology. In this way we are ALWAYS improving. We are trying to “perfect” the things we use. From light bulbs to farm equipment to phones to weapons for war, etc. The problem with this illustration is that we will never really “perfect” or exhaust the limits of where technology will go. Well, in the same kind of way, the priesthood of Jesus “perfects” what was insufficient in the old Levitical priesthood. But in the case of Jesus, his priesthood IS the “perfection” of the old. His priesthood IS the fulfillment of the old. His priesthood IS the “completion” of the old.

He completes that which is lacking in the old priesthood. Think about it, if perfection were realized through the Levitical priesthood, a new priesthood, after the order of Melchizedek would not have been promised. And these verses speak also about the Law . . . of Moses (v. 11, 19, 28) because the Levitical priests were appointed under the law of Moses, they go together. Look at v. 12 again: **“For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well.”**

There is a lot here, but the implication is that the Old system has come to an end. It was temporary, until God brought its fulfillment. The old system, the Mosaic Law as covenant came to an end as the NEW Covenant in Christ arrived. And this is the point of Ps. 110:4. **“The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”** The arrival of the Melchizedekian priesthood means the Aaronic priesthood and the Mosaic law are no longer in force. In other words the Law of Moses as covenant, has given way to its fulfillment which is the NEW covenant in Christ!

With this in mind, I must ask some questions, *“what does this “perfection” do for us?” “Why is it so important that there is a NEW and BETTER High Priest?” “What does it mean that Christ has fulfilled the Law of Moses?”* Well, this is important for us because the old covenant and the old priesthood was not sufficient in that it could not complete what is lacking in us and in this world because of sin. Now, you might say, *“Jon, they also were saved by grace through faith as they trusted God and his promises to save.”* And “yes” you would be correct. But still, their salvation waited for this new priesthood. This is one of the author’s points. Look over at 10:1-4: **“For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”** The old priesthood and the old covenant could never take away sins. YES, their sins were forgiven! But, not apart from the promise of God to send his SON. They looked forward. We look back. Look at 11:39-40 **“And all these, though**

commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.”

For the rest of our time, in a more practical way, I want to mention 5 ways the Levitical Priesthood is inadequate.

The old priesthood could not FULLY and FINALLY forgive sins. Only in Christ can the full pardon of sins be found! Can you imagine with what great passion and emotion this pastor urged these Hebrews in 6:1-2: **“Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.”** Those things will not and cannot save you from your sins! In the same way today, look unto Christ, who is both the “author” and “finisher” of our faith. As Gentiles we are not looking to Mosaic Law or the Levitical priesthood, but the principle still applies concerning good works in general. Are you trusting your good works that God might accept you? Do you look back to the walking of an aisle or your water baptism or even that you joined a church as the basis of your acceptance from God? These things WILL NOT make you complete. They have no power to save!

The old priesthood could not secure FULL access to God. Those priests could only enter the earthly temple and the high priest could only go once a year behind the veil into the holy of holies. But, our high priest has **“passed through the heavens”** (4:14). Do you remember what happened when Jesus laid down his sinless life and offered himself up as a sacrifice on the cross. Matt. 27:51 says: **“And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.”** In Heb. 6:19 we read: **“We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain . . .”** Now, in Christ, our FULL access to God is complete. The high priest only entered once a year, but our high priest, after making purification for sins, sits at the right hand of the majesty on high, where he sits forever. This is why he can say in John 6:37: **“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.”** If you come to him in repentance and faith, your coming to the Father is complete! You can come!

The old priesthood could not transform human beings so they might become righteous. The old priesthood had nothing to offer but animals. Yes, they offered themselves also. But, who were these men? They were sinners. And if they were to truly offer themselves, they would only receive just punishment. And concerning the animals, they were not effective. None of them were “righteous.” No, they weren’t “sinful” in and of themselves. But they were still a part of this sinful world waiting redemption. And they had no power to save us, nor give us a righteous standing before God. This is Paul’s point in Romans. He says in 1:16: **“For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for IT is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also for the Greek.”**

The old priesthood could not effectually motivate or sanctify the people of God in respect to godliness. In Jer. 31:31 we read: **“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah . . .”** And then in v. 33: **“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days,**

declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.” Here we see the prophesy of a heart change. This is the power of the new covenant in Christ. I recall the words of Paul to Titus: **“But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life”** (Titus 3:4-7).

Or Titus 2:11-12: **“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age . . .”**

I also think of Heb. 12:1-2: **“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”**

The old priesthood could not restore the rule human beings lost when Adam sinned. I often speak of these verses in my preaching. But, do you remember God’s command to Adam and Eve right from the beginning. In Gen. 1:28 God says: **“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”** This is the command to rule the earth, to govern the earth, to order the earth. But, when they sinned, what happened to the quality of their ruling? Instead of ruling in righteousness, they ruled in sin. Adam was our first “king” and our first “priest.” And no matter what he did and no matter what we do, because of sin, we can never restore what Adam (and us) lost in the fall . . . Aaron and the priests of his family could only do so much as sinners. But they could never restore what we lost in the fall.

Now, in closing, let’s think back to Psalm 110. It speaks primarily about a king who will come as a ruler. But, right in the middle it says **“The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”** You see, this king who will come, will also be a priest. And He will restore what we lost in Adam.

There is much more in this chapter. In fact, I have 6 more truths as we continue next week. But for today, we will stop. Jesus is superior to the Levitical priesthood because his priesthood is complete. He has passed through the heavens. He has gone beyond the veil. He has done those earthly priests could not do and what cannot do. And our hope is anchored in heaven where Christ sits today. Therefore, we worship Him as both our King and our Priest!