

Heb 7:20-22 The Superiority of Jesus' Priesthood (part 2)

As we've seen, cp. 7 is about perfection, namely, the perfection of the Jesus' work as our high priest. To put it another way, Jesus is the fulfillment of everything the Levitical priesthood was under Mosaic law and the old covenant. And our author is exhorting those Hebrew believers to "move on to maturity," to leave the elementary doctrines of that system and look unto Christ, who has fulfilled and brought those things to an end. Look at v. 11: "**Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood . . . what further need would there have been for another priest.**" 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 forever.**" I will try a gardening illustration. I think of the old farmer who knows nothing of modern equipment preparing his soil and then running his long rows and then walking down those rows, bending over, and planting those seeds. And then comes the invention of the planter. It is the most amazing invention. I don't even have a big garden, but it is gold to me. It has two wheels and a holder for your seed. You put the seed in and off you go, as it spaces the seed the right width apart and does in minute! what used to take hours. Why would I ever go back to that, especially as my back hurts more and more the older I get, since I have this nice planter.

Well, in the same kind of way, the new has come. The old priesthood under Mosaic law has come to an end. Jesus, the Son of God has fulfilled and brought the old covenant to an end. Jesus is superior. He has ushered in a New Priesthood. This is why we have Melchizedek in the Bible. He was the priest of Salem, who blessed Abraham after his battle to rescue Lot. And nothing is said about his genealogy, his birth, or his death. And he is not mentioned again until Ps. 110:4: "The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, **'You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.'**" This verse is so important! It is like a seed which sits in the ground for many years and does not grow. It is like a treasure chest hidden in ground for many years, from which ALL the wisdom of God is found! From a Jewish perspective, they had no way of understanding the meaning of this verse, yet there it is "in the ground"! Why? So that the writer of Hebrews can show its fulfillment in Christ! And, how fitting for us today as we take the Lord's Supper. And we know of this great wisdom! Jesus says, "***This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood . . .***" This is what we celebrate today! I have 3 more truths from our text in cp. 7 as to why Jesus' priesthood is superior to the old, but only 1 for today.

1. Jesus is superior because his priesthood is accompanied by an oath. Jesus is the guarantor of a better covenant. Look at vv. 20-22: "**And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever.' This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.**" Here, the emphasis is on the words: "***The Lord has sworn.***" And if you think back to this Psalm (turn there), it is David talking. And in v. 1 he says, "**The Lord . . . said . . . to my Lord.**" This is very interesting. We have one "**Lord**," speaking to another "**Lord**." This verse is used to prove Jesus' deity, as this is the Father speaking to the Son. And in these words He is making an oath, "***the Lord has sworn.***"

Here, he is comparing Aaron and his priesthood with that of the priesthood of Jesus. With Aaron, he became a priest by God's command. In Exod. 28:1 God says to Moses: **"Bring near to you Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the people of Israel, to serve me as priests."** This is a command only. There is no mention of a divine oath. But, with the priesthood of Jesus, which is "after the order of Melchizedek" there is an oath. GOD SWEARS! And He **"will not change his mind."**

We saw this principle back in 6:13-20 with Abraham as God made an oath. We often make oaths by swearing on a "stack of Bibles" or "on my mother's grave" if we really want to make our point. And we are sinful and often change our minds. But with God, since He is immutable, unchangeable, He cannot swear by any higher authority. And God did not "swear" in this way with Aaron's priesthood. Why? Because that priesthood would come to an end. There is a change from the old to the new. But with Christ, He is a priest "forever" and his priesthood will never change. Brothers and sisters, at the basis of this promise and this oath is the eternal decree of God (which cannot change). This oath is tied to the **"secret things of God"** (Deur. 29:29). This is God's **"eternal covenant"** (Heb. 13:20) flowing from an eternal, holy, loving, and merciful God. This is why we can say God loved us before the foundations of the world. And how do we know this is true?

We know God keeps his promise because He sent his Son. He is both the "King" and "Priest" of Psalm 110. In Ps. 2:7 we read: **"I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you.'"** Look at v. 22: **"This makes Jesus the guarantor (or guarantee) of a better covenant."** I love this verse! The KJV says he is our "surety." In other words, He Himself makes something SURE. This is so important to the author. He keeps talking to them and to us about "confidence." In other words, there is something about the priesthood of Jesus that makes something SURE. And if something is SURE, we can trust it with confidence. Look at 3:6: **"And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope."** And 3:14: **"For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end."** And 4:16: **"Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."** And 10:19: **"Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus . . ."** And finally 10:35: **"Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward."** Today, our confidence is in Jesus, who is the **"guarantor of a better covenant."** He is our surety.

I think of our children's catechism. Let me remind us of 3 questions and answers.

Q. How then can you avoid Gods curse?

A. I am guilty, & I cannot avoid Gods curse, by any deeds that I can do. (Rom. 3:19-20. Rom 11:6. 2 Cor. 3:5.)

Q. But yet God is wonderful, good and merciful; What has God done for redeeming these naughty ones?

A. God so loved the World that he gave his only Son Jesus Christ, God man, to be our **Surety**, to redeem us, and to procure all good to us. (John 3:16. Mat. 1:21-23. Heb. 7:22,25. Gal. 3:13. 1 Cor. 1:30.)

Q. What did, and what does this Surety for us?

A. Christ was made a curse for us; and Christ died for our naughtiness, and was laid in the grave; and God was fully satisfied; and released him from that prison, and took him up to Heaven, and set him on his right hand. (Gal. 3:13. 1 Cor. 15:3-4. Isa. 42:1. Mat. 12:18. & 17:5. Phil. 2:7-8. 1 Cor. 15:4. Isa. 53:8-11. Act. 1:2,9. Rom. 8:34. Heb. 1:3,13.)

Let me try and explain this further as we think about the word “surety” as we “remember” our Lord’s death. The definition of the word here is “*one who guarantees the reality of something*” (Louw& Nida). When someone asks us a question, we often say, “*I guarantee it.*” “*I guarantee it will be hot this July.*” “*I guarantee taxes will continue to go up.*” Or, if you go fishing with Blaine, I may say, “*I guarantee you will . . . enjoy your time in conversation.*” We say these things because we want the person to know that we are SURE of something. We are confident!

In the OT, this word “guarantee” or “surety” takes on a deeper meaning. In the OT it is more like a bondsman, a person who pledges his name, property, or influence in order to make sure something is done. It is kind of like a parent signing in the place of their grown child who wants to establish some credit. Whether this is smart or not, I don’t know. But, when a parent signs his/her name to the CC contract, he/she is saying, “*If Johnny doesn’t pay, I will take care of it.*” I will be “surety” for this contract.

One of the best examples is found in the story of Joseph. After Joseph was sold into slavery and then rose to the 2nd in power in Egypt, there came a great famine. So, Jacob sent his sons down to Egypt to buy food. But, he didn’t send Benjamin, his youngest boy, fearing he may lose him like he did Joseph. And while they were there, Joseph said to them, “***go and bring your youngest brother.***” And in the meantime, I will keep Simeon with me until you return. So, they go back and run out of food again. So, Jacob says you must return to buy more food. And they say, “***We can’t return unless Benjamin goes with us.***” Do you remember what Judah says to Jacob? Gen. 43:8-9: “***Send the boy with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you and also our little ones. I will be a pledge of his safety. From my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever.***” He was saying, “*As much as in my power, I guarantee his return. If not, I am to blame. I will be his surety.*”

Another example is the Apostle Paul as he writes to Philemon about the escaped slave Onesimus. He tells him, “***I am sending him back, and if he owes you anything, put that to my account. I will be his surety. I will repay.***” Brothers and sisters, do you see the picture here concerning Christ. As the Son takes on his mission, he says to the Father, “*Charge to my account WHATEVER my people owe you and I will FULLY cover their debts. I will be their surety. I will be their guarantee. I will be their bondsman.*” Jesus Christ is the OATH of God. He is our confidence!

Repeat Catechism.

Q. How then can you avoid Gods curse?

A. I am guilty, & I cannot avoid Gods curse, by any deeds that I can do.

Q. But yet God is wonderful good and merciful; What has God done for redeeming these naughty ones?

A. God so loved the World that he gave his only Son Jesus Christ, God man, to be our Surety, to redeem us, and to procure all good to us.

Q. What did, and what does this Surety for us?

A. Christ was made a curse for us; and Christ died for our naughtiness, and was laid in the grave; and God was fully satisfied; and released him from that prison, and took him up to Heaven, and set him on his right hand.

Adam cowered in fear in the garden for he had not confidence to approach God, as his sins had not been covered. Though he did have hope in God's promise. Noah and his family were under great fear as the waters came and rescinded. But there was hope in God's promise as he built an altar to the Lord and sacrificed those animals. Abraham, though a man with great faith, as he considered his sins, also sacrificed animals, with hope in God's promise. As David considered his sins of murder, theft, lying, adultery, etc., he knew he could not trust in the blood of bulls and goats. But there was hope. In his misery in all his sickness and troubles, Job often had very little confidence. But, there was hope because He knew that his redeemer lives! Brothers and sisters, Jesus says, "*This cup is the new covenant in my blood, as often as you drink it, remember me.*" Remember, my blood was the payment for your confidence because I AM a your surety. When God looked upon the sacrifice of the Son, He was fully satisfied.

And today, it isn't merely that your sins are forgiven in this NEW COVENANT, but you now have EVERYTHING you need for life and godliness. You have been given the Holy Spirit. And He will lead you to all truth. He will lead you to love Christ with all your heart soul mind and strength. And then He will lead you through this life and all the way to heaven where He give you what He has! And you will worship Him forever! Brothers and sisters, Jesus Himself is God's oath. The old system with the animals could never be such a surety. They could never wash away sins! The old priesthood under Mosaic Law, the old covenant, was only a guardian until the new would come in the person and work of Christ. In closing let's all be encouraged as we take the Lord's Supper today by the words of 10:19-23: **Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.**"