

Heb. 7:23-28 The Superiority of Jesus' Priesthood (part 3)

This morning, I will finish up chapter 7. And our title is still: The Superiority of Jesus' Priesthood. Melchizedek is our picture. He was priest of Salem who blessed Abraham after his battle and rescue of Lot. As we've seen, the reason we have such a priest who blesses Abraham way before the time of Moses is to give us a type of our high priest. Our author is referring to Psalm 110:4 as we see the prophesy of a coming priest who will be unlike the priests under Mosaic Law, the Levites. Their time has come to an end. Why? Because Jesus has fulfilled that system. THAT priesthood, under Mosaic Law, could not "perfect" anything. The old system was good and right for it's time. But, it had to come to an end. Again, why? Because the "perfect" has come in the gospel of Jesus Christ. And as we saw last week, he is the guarantee of a better covenant.

Let me remind us of our comparison so far. Jesus' priesthood is superior because: 1) His is of a completely different order (vv. 13-14); 2) His is indestructible (vv. 15-17); 3) His brings us into God's presence (vv. 18-19); and 4) His is accompanied by an oath (vv. 20-22). Today, I have two more reasons. Brothers and sisters, we need these truths! They are so important for us as we consider our own salvation. They are so important for us to understand what a glorious gospel we have. They are important for us as we consider the OT and the OC in relation to the new. So let's begin. 1) Jesus is superior because his priesthood is permanent; and 2) Jesus is superior because Jesus is a sinless and perfect priest.

1. Jesus is superior because his priesthood is permanent. Look at vv. 23-24: "**The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever.**" The inferiority of the Levitical priesthood is clear because death was the master of every Levitical priest. They were born. They served their time. And they died. EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THEM! There were no fewer than 83 priests starting with Aaron and ending with Phineas and the destruction of the temple in 70 AD. 13 lived during the time of the tabernacle until the time of Solomon. 18 served until the first temple was destroyed. And the rest served under the time of the 2nd temple. (A.W. Pink). And there were scores of other priests, who were not the high priest. But each and every one of them died. Here, we see a comparison between the many and the ONE. Their priesthood was not permanent but ended when they died. But, Jesus, who is a priest after the order Melchizedek, holds his priesthood permanently.

Now, you might say, "*Jon, Jesus died.*" And you are right. They laid his body in the tomb. But, unlike those other priests, what did he do on the 3rd day? He rose again. He conquered death! And because he conquered death, his priesthood is FOREVER. And since he lives, his priesthood is permanent.

Application: For us, this meant that every moment, by the Spirit, we have access to God. Is there ever a time you do not have access to God? The application is for us to pray always, without ceasing. When you are having a hard day, pray. When you or your loved ones are sick, pray. When you are depressed, pray. When you are anxious, pray. When you are scared, pray. When you doubt your faith, pray. You don't need a ceremony. You don't need a special event such as the Passover or Pentecost or the Day of Atonement as the high priest places his hand on the goat

and lets it do into the wilderness. You don't need a special church service. Pray . . . How? In Jesus' name! His priesthood is permanent. It is unchanging. He will not die. He always makes intercession for us!

For another application look at v. 25: **“Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.”**

Here we see the power of Christ to save sinners. The old Levitical priests all had finish their priesthood at the age of 50 and then they died. But Jesus priesthood is permanent. And, those priests offered the blood of bulls and goats. But what did Jesus offer? He gave himself . . . his own blood. For the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sins. The old system of priests did not have the power to save. They were not effectual for those who wanted to draw near to God. This means that NOW, those who draw near to God . . . CAN draw near to Him.

And I must remind us this morning what we are saved from. We are saved from sin and all its terrible consequences, pollution, guilt, the curse of the law, the captivity of Satan, the wrath to come. One of my favorite verses is Matt. 1:21 which says, **“She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”** Also Gal. 3:13: **“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us . . .”** And 1 Thess. 1:10 as Paul tells us: **“to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”**

And finally, notice who he saves. It is “those who draw near to him,” those who come to him.

2. Jesus is superior because his priesthood sinless and perfect. Look at vv. 26-28. **“For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. 27 He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. 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.”** These have to be some of the most beautiful truths about the Lord Jesus Christ! Here, our author brings to a close what he said back in v. 11. **“If perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood, what further need would there have been for another priest after the order of Melchizedek . . .”** Jesus, NOT Aaron, not the priests of his lineage, but Jesus, who he now refers to him as the SON (v. 28).

The priests under Mosaic law offered sacrifices daily in both the tabernacle and the two temples that followed. And they were appointed in their weakness. In other words, they themselves were sinners. Just like all of us, they had not obeyed God fully. Even the best of them may have been obedient as much as possible to the letter of the law, but failed in their hearts to obey ALL the law. They were just like you and me in this regard. ***For ALL have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*** I am sure they thought ill of their brethren from time to time. I am sure they didn't always keep their eyes away from things they should not look upon. I can imagine also all the sins of the heart and in the flesh in their own homes as they tried to be good husbands and good fathers. This is why the text says they also had to offer up sacrifices for themselves and then for the rest of the people. They were not “perfect.” Nor could they make anyone else perfect. In fact,

their entire system failed in this way. The blood of bulls and goats could never cover their sins nor ours.

But it was not so with Jesus, the one who FULFILLS or “PERFECTS” what was lacking in those priests and in that system. Look at v. 26 again. *“For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest who was . . . holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners.”* As the Son of God, Jesus is holy as God is holy. What can be said of God can be said of him! In 1:3, He **“is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.”** He is innocent, never committing any sins. We say that babies are innocent. And in a manner of speaking this true. They have not experienced this world, not have they committed the world’s sins. But, they are not innocent in the way Jesus is innocent. All of us are “by nature” sinners and “children of wrath.” But Jesus never committed a sin, both in his actions or in his heart. He is unstained. We often get stains on our clothes, sometimes we get them out, sometimes not. The Levitical priests were “stained.” But not so with the Son.

He is the priest of another order. And in the case of the old priests of Mosaic law, they offered animals as a sacrifice. But, what did Jesus offer? . . . He offered Himself! Why? Well, he did it out of love and a desire to do the will of God. But, practically, was there any other way to save sinners? Those animals, though “sinless” were not effectual. In the Garde of Gethsemane, He prayed, *“My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will”* (Matt. 26:39). But you see, it was not possible. There was no sacrifice that was “HOLY, INNOCENT, UNSTAINED, and SEPARATED from sinners” except the SON, 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”** (Heb. 12:2). Therefore, He offered up HIMSELF as the sinless and perfect priest. In this way, He is both the priest AND the offering!

What does this mean for you and me and the world, both Jews and Gentiles.

There is only one sacrifice for our sins. It is the sacrifice of Jesus, the Son of God. This is why Peter can say in Acts 4:12: **“There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”** (Acts 4:12). If you are not a Christian, there is nothing you can do save yourself, but to look in faith to the Son of God and be saved. Jesus is the “way, the truth, and the life” and no one came come to the Father, but through the Son.

This also means that this ONE sacrifice covers ALL your sins, past, present, and future. When I came to Christ back in 1987, what a burden fell from my heart! As I looked at ALL my sins I had committed, I knew that Jesus died for my past sins and I realized that this ONE sacrifice was enough. He also died for all my sins that I will commit in the future. If you are a Christian today, the same is for you. When you sin, you do not have to go to a priest and then confess your sins in order to be forgiven. I remember overseas as my Muslim friends celebrated the holiday of Corban where they would sacrifice a lamb. And after speaking with some of them, they always said “they feel closer to God” and they feel that “God approves of them more” after sacrificing. In essence, this is no different than the old Levitical system. But, as Christians, our high priest has finished his work. On the cross he said “It is finished.” And he breathed his last. And God was satisfied. There is no more need to offer this sacrifice again. Even our Catholic friends who

celebrate the mass, believing in some way, this sacrifice happens again as the bread and wine “miraculously” turn again into the body and blood of Jesus, are mistaken.

This also means that this ONE sacrifice is effectual in giving you POWER over sin. Do not ever think that just because you made a profession and walked an aisle or were dunked under the water or joined a church that you are saved . . . IF you are not becoming more godly! I know this is somewhat subjective. For we all grow at different rates. And we all don't produce the same fruit. But, over time, there will be a growth in godliness. Why? Because of the Holy Spirit. Brothers and sisters, because of this ONE sacrifice, we live under a new covenant. (We will see this more in cp. 8.). And this NEW covenant is powerful. It is effectual. In Jer. 31 speaking of this new covenant, we read 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. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”**

Look with me to Rom. 8:9-14: **“You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” Do you see the great power that works in us?**

Brothers and sisters, the priesthood of Jesus Christ is effectual? It is powerful. And these effects go much deeper than merely covering our sins and giving us power to live and grow in godliness! Our high priest bless us with everything we need for life and godliness! Do you remember with Melchizedek that he “blessed” Abraham as the king and priest of Salem? Well, the blessings of the Son are the most beautiful blessings, producing the most beautiful fruits. Let me name just a few in closing. We are given: righteousness, peace, light, access to God, joy, etc. (EVERYTHING we need for life and godliness, and much more). In these ways, We are the recipients of his blessing of which his perfection accomplish for us?

Today, as “those who draw near to him” we have the most beautiful, sinless, and perfect high priest!