

A Better Priesthood

Hebrews 7:11-22

INTRO:

Why do we need a new priesthood? The Jewish believers who are the writer's audience must be asking this question. If the Levitical priest was good enough for years, why do they now need a different and better priesthood? For that matter, why do we New Testament believers who are the spiritual seed of Abraham and not the physical seed care? Isn't it enough to know that Jesus died and Jesus died for me?

In one sense it is. In another, we will never enter into all the joys of our salvation unless we understand what God has done for us. The writer's burden in this paragraph is to show how we need a better permanent priesthood, a priesthood after the order of Melchizedek. He does this in two parts.

I. The Law had to Change (v. 11-14)

II. Jesus is Perfect where Levi was not Perfect (v. 15-22)

I. The Law had to Change (v. 11-14)

A. ***“Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron?” (Hebrews 7:11)***

Why does there have to be a different priesthood? For what God the Father was doing in Christ a new priesthood would have to start.

B. The writer cites two reasons the priesthood had to change. First, the law changed. ***“For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.” (Hebrews 7:12)***

God established the Levitical priesthood when He handed down the Law to Moses at Sinai. Nobody just up and designed the priesthood. God mandated it by statute. Therefore, if the priesthood changed, the Law has to change. In fact, we are to learn that the Law which represents the Old Covenant will be superseded by the New Covenant in Christ.

C. The second reason we know that the priesthood changed, God's chosen priesthood is no longer that which comes from Levi is because the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah was not a Levite. **(Hebrews 7:13-14)**

“For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.”

The writer assumes a truth he will develop in the verses that follow. Jesus is God's chosen great high priest. But He was not physically descended from Levi. He had the wrong genealogy under the Law.

II. Jesus is Perfect where Levi was not Perfect (v. 15-22)

A. So, we learned that the Levitical Priesthood was not perfect and needed to be set aside because God's Son, Israel's Messiah, did not fit into this previous pattern. Jesus was the perfect priest because first, He was a made a priest after the order of Melchizedek because He had an endless life. **(Hebrews 7:15–16)**

“And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life.”

Our Lord was not God's appointed high priest, because of God's commandment given among men, nor was He a priest because He had the right genealogy. He was God's priest because He ever lives.

B. The second reason the Lord Jesus replaced Levitical priests is because the Levitical system was never perfect. It could not make anything perfect. **(Hebrews 7:17–19)**

“For He testifies: ‘You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.’ For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.”

1. The Law had to be changed (and the priesthood with it) because it was weak and useless. The Law and the Levitical priesthood made nothing perfect. The word perfect did not mean without sin. It did mean that the Law could not forgive our sins. It could not make people acceptable to God or allow them to go boldly into the very presence of God. The Law was not evil. It just was without power. **(Romans 8:3)**

“For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,”

2. The Law was weak and useless because it could not bring us to salvation. It could not produce a once for all forgiveness of our sins. It could not help us become conformed to the image of God's Son. In short, it could not make us all that we could be in Christ.

C. Third, the reason Jesus became the new priest after the order of Melchizedek and set aside the old covenant was because God, Himself, commanded it with an oath.

“And inasmuch as He was not made priest without an oath (for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: ‘The LORD has sworn And will not relent, You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek’), by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.” (Hebrews 7:20–22)

1. In Chapter 6, the writer reminded us that it was God's oath that made us even more sure of the promises God made to Abraham. God's oath cannot change. In this chapter the writer quotes **Psalm 110:4** twice.

"The LORD has sworn And will not relent, You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."

He cited this verse in **verses 17 and 20**. The writer did not make this up. In David's psalm written about Israel's Messiah, he wrote, directed by God, that Messiah would be a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

2. Sometimes there are verses in the Bible we do not like. Here is a verse that Israelite people did not particularly like, but it is true none the less.

Two important truths are here. First, the reason we do not need to bring a sacrifice to the Temple to have our sins atoned for is because Jesus is the high priest, who is perfect and the guarantee of a New Covenant, superior to the Old Covenant that allows us to draw near to God because our sins are put away once and for all.

Second, this is how we can be assured of **Hebrews 4:15-16**.

"For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."