

Hebrews 7:11-28

Jesus Christ the Eternal Priest King

The superiority of the priesthood of Jesus Christ is demonstrated in Hebrews chapter seven. Emphasis on Melchizedek in Genesis 14:17-20 will fade into the background in the discussion and Psalm 110:4 will be central in the mind of the author of Hebrews. The old priesthood of Aaron was inadequate (Hebrews 7:11-14). If the old priesthood and its covenant could have been effective in bringing men to God it would not have been replaced with a better one. Under Judaism all of the priests were from the tribe of Levi. Jesus was from the tribe of Judah, and therefore a new priesthood under the order of Melchizedek was needed (7:1-10). The whole old order was superseded by a new and better one. Something greater than Aaron, the Levitical priestly order, and the old covenant were needed.

In order to be effective the new priesthood must be forever (Heb. 7:15-25). Under the old system the high priest had to be replaced when the death of each high priest occurred. What was needed was a high priest chosen and ordained by God who lived forever (7:20-22; Psa. 110:4). "Jesus Christ has become the guarantee of a better covenant" (v. 22). It is "Because He abides forever," that He "holds His priesthood permanently" (v. 24). Therefore, "He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession or them" (v. 25, NASB95). All Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update unless otherwise noted.

Jesus Christ was sinless and therefore did not need to offer a sacrifice for Himself as the priests under the old covenant. Christ "does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself" (Hebrews 7:27). This new priest did not need to endlessly repeat the same sacrifices for sin because He offered the one perfect sacrifice that would cover all the sins of the people. That one sacrifice by Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, has forever opened the way for sinners to go directly into the presence of God.

Before we examine this passage in detail, it cannot be overstressed by Bible believing Christians the error, even heresy, of the cults that teach a modern day priestly order of Melchizedek. The Bible is imperatively clear that Jesus did not ordain priests in the order of Melchizedek. Jesus is the unique one of a kind fulfillment of the High Priest of the order of Melchizedek. He is a priest forever. That is the whole emphasis of Melchizedek being a type of Jesus Christ as our great High Priest.

It is obvious from the true Scriptures of Christianity, the Bible, not additional books of the cults, that Christians do not need any temples, secret oaths, rituals, and special underclothes, to function as true priests in the priesthood of believers. Christian believers do not have special priestly offices and powers to communicate with the dead. This is strictly forbidden in the Old Testament. John the Baptist did not pass on the Aaronic priesthood to pagan cult leaders in 1829. John died at the hands of Herod c. 30 A. D. (Matthew 14:1-12). Moreover, Peter, James and John did not confer the Aaronic order to modern day cult leaders, either. Such teachings are heresy in the fullest sense of the word.

There is a priesthood embracing all the redeemed, men and women, a "royal priesthood," that is neither Aaronic nor Melchizedek. The apostle Peter said: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy" (1 Peter 2:9-10). This priesthood of the believer is embraced by all true believers in Jesus Christ who have been saved by His grace. Every Christian is to exercise his right to go into the presence of God in prayer interceding for themselves and others, and then to go out

sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with a lost world. That is the privilege and responsibility of every believer in Christ.

For further study I highly recommend [*The Kingdom of the Cults* by Walter Martin, Bethany House Publishers](#). He has an excellent discussion of this Melchizedek and Aaronic teaching by modern day pagan cults on pages 166-226. They may use the name Jesus Christ and call themselves a Christian church but they are in no sense of the word Christian.

The author of Hebrews demonstrates clearly that Jesus is the High Priest, whose priesthood does not depend on any genealogy, but on Himself as the unique, one of a kind, Son of God. As the Son of God He lives forever and holds His priesthood permanently. He does not ordain a priestly order to follow in His footsteps. He is the one and only High Priest. He does not need anyone to be a mediator to Him. He is the High Priest of every believer. We can go directly into His presence anytime, anyplace or any occasion. We do not need anyone to approach Him on our behalf. It is a great privilege for every believer to pray for others, but it quite different from a cult-like priesthood.

Jesus is the High priest who is sinless and never needed to offer a sacrifice for His own sins. Therefore, He made the one and only, once forever, sacrifice required to deal with man's sin problem. "The wages of sin is death" and Jesus paid that wage in full on our behalf. No more sacrifices are needed to deal with sin.

Jesus Christ is the new priest in a new priestly order (Heb. 7:11-20)

The author of Hebrews is explaining that the Levitical sacrificial system had demonstrated itself ineffective to reconcile sinners with a holy God. A new priesthood was necessary.

"Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron? For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also. For the one concerning whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests" (Hebrews 7:11-14).

In verses 17 and 21 the author quotes Psalm 110:4 which the Jewish people commonly acknowledged as messianic. This is why the author of Hebrews has spent so much time talking about Melchizedek. Jesus was not of the descendants of Levi. He was of the tribe of Judah, the lineage of kings, not priests. "And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life. For it is attested of Him, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek'" (Hebrews 7:15-17). What was promised and foreshadowed about Christ in the Old Testament has come to pass. The whole basis of this new priesthood was an indestructible life. Jesus' priesthood is permanent. He is eternal, immortal, and invincible. He will never die. There is never any need of anyone to replace Him. Jesus did not become a priest because He was born into a priestly family, but because He would not be replaced by death. Jesus is a priest forever because of His resurrection. He is alive!

Melchizedek's name means "king of righteousness" was a man resembling the Son of God, "having been made like the Son of God" (v. 3), was an ordinary human being who was "king of Salem." The name "Salem" is from the same root as the Hebrew word for "peace" (*shalom*) and was probably the ancient city of Jerusalem. The Scriptures don't record any information about his genealogy like it does for the Levitical priesthood. It simply says this king priest suddenly appeared on the scene and disappeared just as fast (Genesis 14:18-20). "He is without father or mother or genealogy" having "neither beginning or days nor end of life." That is what makes him a type of the eternal priesthood of Jesus. Hebrews sees Melchizedek as an ordinary man as a type or

foreshadowing of Christ. Jesus is the King of Righteousness who brings perfect peace to all who believe on Him. Since nothing is said of Melchizedek's death it is a further type or foreshadowing of the risen Jesus. Jesus is the priest forever by virtue of His resurrection from the dead.

The laws of the old covenant were weak and useless to make a person right with God. The old covenant "cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience" (Heb. 9:9). "For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near" (Hebrews 10:1). "For by one offering He [Jesus] has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). The Law could not do that. Perfection did not come through the old covenant priests and their sacrifices, but through the Son and His sacrifice.

The purpose of the Law was perfect at pointing its finger and bringing guilt upon the sinner. It was perfect at pointing to the coming of the High Priest, Jesus Christ. However, it is clear you cannot depend upon the Law to save you. In that sense it was powerless and ineffective. The Law pointed the sinner to God and His provision for salvation through Jesus Christ. "For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God" (Hebrews 7:18-19).

The Law was cancelled because Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law. It was wiped out. The writer of Hebrews uses the word *athetesis* which is used for doing away with something, annulling a treaty, abrogating a promise, removing a man's name off the civil registry, and making a law inoperative. The word is also translated "to put away" or "set aside." The Greek translation note in the NET Bible reads, "the setting aside of a former command comes to pass." Jesus by His perfect obedience to the Law, and perfect sacrifice for sin wiped out the ceremonial Law.

Jesus perfectly fulfilled it because no one else could. The Law was powerless and ineffective. Its sole purpose was to demonstrate the sinfulness of mankind and man's need for a perfect sinless Savior. No other priest could accomplish this on our behalf. Jesus brings us into the presence of God, and by His once and for all atoning sacrifice for sin Jesus covered all our sins. He alone gives us perfect access to God.

The establishment of a better priesthood by Christ demonstrates there has been a change from the Mosaic Law, the old covenant and the succession of priests of Aaron. The Levitical high priest is the evidence that the Mosaic covenant is no longer in effect. We have a better covenant with a greater High Priest and a greater sacrifice. The Levitical priesthood was never intended to be permanent because it was inadequate. The priesthood was central to the Mosaic Covenant so a change in priesthood would indicate a change in the whole covenant. "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4).

Christians are no longer under the Law and the old covenant (Rom. 6:14-15; Gal. 3:24-25; 5:1; 6:2). If Christ is our High Priest then we cannot be under the Law and the old covenant. Over half of the occurrences of the word "covenant" (*diatheke*) (17 times) are found in the book of Hebrews where the new covenant is more fully developed than any other book in the New Testament. This word has more of the idea of an absolute will. Jesus is the guarantee of a better covenant. We are now "in Christ."

Jesus Christ is the great High Priest (Heb. 7:20-25)

Even though Jesus was from the tribe of Judah, He qualified as the eternal High Priest because He is the Davidic Messiah (Psa. 110:1, 4). As we have noted on other occasions, Jesus did not just assume the office of priest. He was appointed priest by God the Father. The statement God makes regarding the appointment of Jesus as High Priest is in the form of an "oath." God has sworn an oath that will last forever. If God makes an oath it is of extraordinary priority. The priesthood of Jesus Christ can never pass away. He is eternal and His priesthood is eternal. "For it is attested of Him, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek' .

. . . (for they indeed became priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One who said to Him, "The Lord has sworn And will not change His mind, 'You are a priest forever'" (Hebrews 7:17, 21). Therefore, Jesus is the "guarantor of a better covenant," that it will not be annulled, because it is guaranteed by an oath of God (Heb. 7:22). Jesus is the one who gives the surety. He is guarantor. We are all familiar with this beautiful Greek word. *Egguos* is the person who guarantees someone else's overdraft at a bank. He is the surety for that the load will be paid in full. He puts up the bail for the prisoner to guarantee that the prisoner will appear in court at the appointed time.

The covenant depends on the priesthood, therefore, Jesus, the eternal priest becomes the guarantee of an eternal priesthood. God is the one who imposed this new covenant (Heb. 8:8-10).

How do we know that the old covenant and its law and priesthood are no longer operative? How do we know for sure that when God saves us we are saved for all eternity? How do we know that these promises we are studying today are true and we can stake eternity on them? Jesus Christ by his atoning sacrifice for sin guarantees it. He is the author of the new covenant. Everything depends upon Him, and we know God has accepted His atoning work because God raised Him from the dead.

Jesus is the assurance of a new and better kind of relationship with a holy God. We are under a new covenant. We celebrate that covenant every time we come to the Lord's table and observe the Lord's Supper. It is a covenant based upon the broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ.

We have a "better hope" (*kreitton*) which is salvation and sanctification through Jesus' high priesthood. This "better" covenant is higher in rank or preferable to the old. "Christ was faithful as a Son over His house—whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end" (Hebrews 3:6). Hebrews says much about our hope in Christ. "And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end" (Hebrews 6:11). "By two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us" (Hebrews 6:18). "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful" (Hebrews 10:23).

"And inasmuch as it was not without an oath (for they indeed became priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One who said to Him, 'The Lord has sworn And will not change His mind, 'You are a priest forever'"); so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant. The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:20-25).

There was nothing permanent about the old covenant. The Law was a temporary provision, a tutor, to bring us to Christ (Gal. 3:24-25). "Now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor." All of the priests died and had to be replaced. Every year they had to observe the rituals of the Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. When the high priest died he had to be replaced with another. However, the priesthood of Jesus is eternal. It is irreplaceable, unalterable, non-transferable.

In my opening comments about the priesthood of Melchizedek I said the priesthood of Jesus is non-transferable. The word *aparabatos* is a legal term describing something that belongs to one person and cannot ever be transferred to anyone else. Jesus Christ has an *aparabatos* priesthood (Heb. 7:24). "Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently" (Hebrews 7:24). Our English translations translate *aparabatos* with the word "permanently" or "untransferable." It is without successor. It is unchangeable. Then why do the cults take what is obvious and build a whole false religion on a false lineage of a false priesthood? The priesthood of Jesus Christ is not something passed along from Him to another. He alone

can possess it. His priesthood does not pass to another precisely because it is a perpetual priesthood. He is the only way into presence of God. He is in Heaven making intercession forever.

"Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). F. F. Bruce wrote, "His once-completed self-offering is utterly acceptable and efficacious; His contact with the Father is immediate and unbroken; His priestly ministry on His people's behalf is never-ending, and therefore the salvation which He secures to them is absolute." That finished work of Christ should cause our hearts to shout amen! B. F. Westcott has some wise counsel. He said, "The modern description of Christ pleading in heaven His passion, 'offering His blood,' on behalf of men has no foundation in the epistle. His glorified humanity is the eternal pledge of the absolute efficacy of His accomplished work. He pleads, as the older writers truly expressed the thought, by His Presence on the Father's Throne."

Jesus is our great High Priest (Heb. 7:26-28).

Jesus is pure in the sight of the LORD God. He is a holy High Priest.

"For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever" (Hebrews 7:26-28). Look how great our High Priest is!

Jesus is described as "holy, innocent, undefiled, and separated from sinners."

Jesus is "exalted above the heavens."

Jesus did not need daily "to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people."

Jesus made only one sacrifice for sinners. None other was ever needed because His was a perfect sacrifice that was permanently accepted by a holy God. "He did this one for all when He offered up Himself."

What do all of these combined statements make of works salvation? What do they do to works sanctification? All the fleshly works of sinful man stands condemned. There is only one sacrifice acceptable to God and that is the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. "Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."

There is only one way to stand holy in the eyes of a holy God. "For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law" (Romans 3:23-28, English Standard Version).

What is the basis of such profound teaching? Jesus Christ was the Son of God offering Himself for the sin of all men. He was the sinless Son of God dying as a sinless substitute for the guilty sinner. He was the perfect High Priest offering the perfect offering which was the one perfect sacrifice of Himself. God in His grace stands before us today ready to receive us if we confess our need to Him and believe on Christ alone for salvation.

Some abiding principles and practical applications

1. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. God did everything to save us from beginning to end. He sent His own Son to be the perfect covering for our sins. He paid our sin debt in full and rose from the dead. God can now justify every believing sinner based upon the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ's death. Jesus offered Himself as the sinless Lamb of God to take away sin. This provided a perfect atonement. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." There is nothing left to do but believe on Christ. Salvation that Christ provides is permanent because the priesthood of Christ is permanent.

2. We have a great High Priest who is always ready to intercede on our behalf. We have a mediator in the presence of God who is Jesus Christ is our eternal High Priest. All we have to do is humble ourselves and call upon His name. Moreover, Jesus is praying for us constantly. He is a throned Priest-King asking what He will from a gracious loving Father who always hears and grants His requests.

3. It is noteworthy that the term "priest" is never used in the New Testament of a minister or order in the church. It was used in Judaism of Old Testament priesthood which was fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Let's make it very clear that not only was the Old Testament sacrificial system fulfilled, but it was finished and unrepeatable by the all sufficient sacrifice of Christ. Jesus Christ is alive and is a priest forever, "the same yesterday today and forever."

4. The only priesthood Christians have is in and through Jesus Christ, our High Priest. Every believer is considered a "royal priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5). This is the priesthood of the believer and it includes every believer in Christ, men and women. "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:1-2). In and through Jesus Christ the priesthood of the believer is made effectual. Our eternal security rests on the intercessory ministry of Jesus (Rom. 8:33-34).

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Wil is a graduate of William Carey University, B. A.; New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Th. M.; and Azusa Pacific University, M. A. He has pastored in Panama, Ecuador and the U. S, and served for over 20 years as missionary in Ecuador and later in Honduras. He had a daily expository Bible teaching ministry head in over 100 countries for more than ten years. He continues to seek opportunities to be personally involved in world missions. Wil and his wife Ann have three grown daughters. He currently serves as a Baptist pastor, director of missions, and teaches seminary extension courses in Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru and Ecuador.