

The Superior Priesthood of Jesus

Hebrews 7: 11-28

11) If perfection [free access to God] could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law [ceremonial rituals] was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come--one in the order of Melchizedek not in the order of Aaron? [Moses consecrated his brother Aaron and Aaron's sons as priests] (NIV, Emphasis and interpretation added).

(See [Melchizedek: A type of Christ](#)).

Levitical Priesthood. Moses can be seen as a go between for God and the Israelites during the exodus from Egypt, although Moses was not called a priest until centuries later (Ps. 99:6). During this time “an ordained priesthood came into being. According to God’s command (Ex. 28.1), Moses consecrated his brother Aaron and Aaron’s sons as priests. These men were from the tribe of Levi.” Moses “anointed Aaron as the ‘high priest among his brethren’ (Lev. 21:10).... The high priest’s most important function was



to preside at the annual Day of Atonement. On that day, the priest could enter the holy of holies of the tabernacle and sprinkle the mercy seat with the blood of sin offering. By doing this, he atoned for his wrongs, for those of his family, and those of all the people of Israel (Lev. 16:1-25). The high priest also had to sprinkle the blood from the sin offering before the veil of the sanctuary and on the horns of the alter (Lev. 4:3-21) (Packer, Tenney, & White Jr, p. 400).

Another Priest. “The most important feature in the ritual of Judaism and in the ceremony of Judaism, and in the law of the Old Testament was the function of the priesthood. Therefore, if Jesus is to be superior in all ways to the old covenant, He must be superior then to the old priesthood. He must be a greater priest than was Aaron and all the other priests who followed in Aaron's line through the tribe of Levi; and that then becomes the heartbeat of the Book of Hebrews; and when we arrived at chapter 4, really at the end of chapter 4 in verse 14, this thought was introduced. "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that has passed into the Heavens, Jesus the Son of God, " and then He goes on to describe what kind of a priest He is” (MacArthur).

12) For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law [the way in which people come into the presence of God].

Change of Priesthood. There was not just another priesthood added to the old. There was a replacement of the old with a new, superior priesthood.

Change of Law. “The great crux of the book then hinges on the priesthood of Christ, that he is a superior priest to any of the old covenant, and this is important, for this establishes Christ’s new covenant as superior to the old; and throughout the Book of Hebrews, we read about Christ being a mediator of a better covenant, a better hope, with better promises, a better sacrifice, with better substance, a better country, a better resurrection, a country not earthly, but heavenly. It talks about a heavenly Christ, a heavenly calling, a heavenly gift, a heavenly country, a heavenly Jerusalem in contrast, to all the earthly things of the first covenant.... The unsaved Jew, who is hanging on the verge of the decision, can let go of Judaism and come to Christ in full confidence that this is sufficient; and so then the key to the superiority of the new covenant over the old, of Christ over all the Old Testament figures, is the priesthood. This is the issue of Judaism, and this is the heartbeat of Hebrews. Jesus must be a great High Priest, for a man cannot go to God unless he be taken there by one who stands between that man and God.” (MacArthur).

13) He [Jesus] of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. [“The Hebrew word usually translated as *altar* (mizbeach) literally means ‘a place of slaughter’” (Packer,



Tenney, & White Jr, p. 398). 14) For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah [A family line dating back to one of Jacob’s twelve sons (Genesis 49)], and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.

15) And what we have said is even clearer if another priest like Melchizedek appears, 16) one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry

but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life [endless life].

Indestructible Life. “The Christian high priest is immortal; having died once for all and risen from the dead, He discharges His ministry on His people’s behalf in the power of a life that can never be destroyed. The law which established the Aaronic priesthood is called a ‘carnal commandment’ because it is ‘a system of earth-bound rules’ (NEB); it is concerned with the externalities of religion—the physical descent of the priests, a material shrine, animal sacrifices and so forth. Like everything else in the Levitical regime, the Aaronic order of priesthood was marked by transience; it stands thus in contrast to the permanence and effectiveness of the priestly office of Christ” (Bruce, p. 148).

17) For it is declared: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek" [cf. Ps.110:4] 18) The former regulation [The Levitical system] is set aside because it was weak and useless 19) (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.

Perfection. The law did not bring anyone into the presence of God; it was a continual reminder of sin.

20) And it was not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath, 21) but he [Jesus] became a priest with an oath when God said to him: "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: `You are a priest forever.'" 22) Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee [surety, KJV] of a better covenant. 23) Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office;

24) but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. 25) Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. 26) Such a high priest meets our need--one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens [Jesus' qualifications]. 27) Unlike the other high priests, he [Jesus] does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. 28) For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son [Jesus], who has been made perfect forever.

What's Your Next Step?

You are loved!

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