

Hebrews 7:11-28 "Jesus Christ, High Priest and Sacrifice"

As we've been studying through this letter to the Hebrew Christians we see that our writer has taken them on an historical journey through their own heritage as he's reminded them of the how Judaism was a precursor to the Messiah, who was promised from ages past, through the prophets.

He's shown them how Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of those promises and that His ministry of reconciliation was perfect, undefiled and eternal compared to the temporal and sin-tainted ministries of men who pointed to Him.

For the Jew, the law and all of its nuances was vital to their existence and unique identity as God's chosen people. They took pride in their identity and unique standing in a way where the law became their spiritual badge, instead of faith in the promises of the Messiah, found in the law and the prophets.

Our writer in Hebrews is putting the law into perspective and the role it played, as well as the role of Jesus Christ who is the Son of God risen from the dead. He is warning these Hebrew Christians not to be tempted to go back to the shadows of what the law spoke of, but to embrace the substance, who is Christ Himself.

He's been talking about Melchizedek and his priesthood and comparing it with the priesthood of Aaron. And now he is going to explain why the priesthood of Aaron and the law, given by God who brought that priesthood into existence, came woefully short of being able to accomplish men's redemption.

HEB 7:11-12 "If *perfection* could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come - one in (according to) the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? 12 For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law."

Notice what the standard is as it relates to what must be accomplished on behalf of men. The answer is *perfection*. If it were possible to work your way to heaven that would be the requirement. You could never do wrong, you could never think wrong and you could never have a wrong attitude.

The law of God addressed all of these aspects. If you went all of your life keeping the law perfectly and then on your deathbed you had a wrong thought, you would be guilty before a perfect and holy God and would be held accountable before the Lord and would stand condemned.

JAM 2:10 "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it."

That doesn't seem fair. Well, you might consider entertaining such a notion if you knew someone who never sinned except on his death bed. But you know better than that. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

The issue isn't, can we attain perfection?, because we're born into this world with a sin nature. You do what you are. People sin because they have a nature which is sinful. We inherited it from Adam. The law was meant to show us this in no uncertain terms. The law can't perfect, it can only show us how imperfect we are.

The law is meant to show us that perfection is impossible for men. But what is impossible for men is quite possible for God. And this is why God came into this world as man. He is perfect and accomplished what we couldn't. He is our perfection and the righteousness we must have to enter into a relationship with Himself. Nothing else will do.

HEB 10:1 "The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming - not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship."

That's not the design of God's law. Law cannot change the heart. Law cannot empower men for righteousness. The Law can only point men to someone outside of themselves who can accomplish perfect righteousness on our behalf.

This is why our writer raises the question in HEB 7:11-12 "If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come - one (according to) the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron?
12 For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law."

This is a rhetorical question. The answer is implied in raising the question. Perfection cannot come through the Levitical priesthood

or anything else related to the law. And then he raises another question regarding this.

If God established the Levitical priesthood with the intention of perfecting men, why in the world would He speak of another priest according to another priesthood to come into existence? If the one was sufficient, why another? Wouldn't that confuse the issue? Is God a God of confusion?

This is the line of thought our writer raises. The answer is implied. No, God is not a God of confusion. The reason He speaks of another priesthood is because the order of Aaron is not only not sufficient, it was never meant to play a direct role in our salvation, other than foreshadowing the true Christ.

God is the one who enacted the first priesthood. If He enacts a second then of necessity the second takes precedence and the first becomes obsolete. But so as to drive the point home our writer raises another question. If Aaron's priesthood was the primary means of our perfection then it stands to reason that our Great High Priest, Jesus Christ, would also be a priest of the same order.

But what do we read?

HEB 7:13-14 "He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. 14 For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests."

Okay, if the priesthood of Aaron was the end-all regarding our salvation then why did the word of God speak of another priesthood regarding Melchizedek? Keep in mind that when David penned Psalm 110, which is a psalm about Christ, he did it many years after the priesthood of Aaron was in existence. Let me refresh your memory.

PSA 110:1-2, 4 "The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." 2 The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies. 4 The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: "You are a priest forever, (after) the order of Melchizedek."

If this priesthood of Christ was to be the true priesthood then why was it not fashioned after Aaron? Why did Jesus not come from the line of Aaron? And then our writer goes on to say, Jesus not only

was not a priest of the order of Aaron, He could not have been since He was of the tribe of Judah.

Moses never said anything about anyone in the tribe of Judah officiating in the temple. Now, what all of this is designed to do is to make these Jewish believers consider the logic behind their own heritage, and to show them how insufficient it is when compared to Christ.

Remember, in the beginning of this letter our writer warned them not to even consider going back to the old ways. This portion of the letter expounds on why they should not. Why do you not go back? Because you would be going back to an inferior and therefore an unproductive priesthood which would leave you in your sins if you depended on it.

Jesus was not of the tribe of Aaron. Therefore the priesthood of Aaron was at best a shadow of Christ. But there's more to this because the way in which these two priesthoods were inaugurated is instructive.

HEB 7:15-17 "And what we have said is even more clear 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. 17 For it is declared: "You are a priest forever, (after) the order of Melchizedek."

F.F. Bruce makes the point: "The priesthood in which (our writer) is interested is different not only because it is not exercised on earth; it belongs to the eternal order, not to the material world."

One is of the law, as it relates to the physical requirements of belonging to a particular line of descent. The other relies on no earthly line, but is based on the very indestructible life of the one who is life eternal. How can the two be compared? One is worldly, the other from heaven itself where the Son of God rules and reigns who Himself is our High Priest.

Which priest would you want representing you? By the way, as a side note, what priesthood are the Jews relying on today? It can only be one or the other. The problem is that if you do not rely on the priesthood of Christ to bring about a peaceful relationship with God you're stuck with the priesthood of Aaron.

But the priesthood of Aaron doesn't exist in Jerusalem today nor can it ever legitimately because there is not one Jew who can prove his lineage as coming from Aaron. The temple was destroyed in

A.D.70 along with all of the records of the tribes of Israel. If they rebuild the temple today, which is part of the plan with many Jews in Jerusalem, who would officiate the blood sacrifices which have not been in practice since A.D.70?

Remember, God was quite clear, that a priest in Israel must be able to prove his lineage. I quoted from EZR 2:61-62 a couple weeks ago where we read "And from among the priests: The descendants of Hobaiah, Hakkoz and Barzillai (a man who had married a daughter of Barzillai the Gileadite and was called by that name). 62 These searched for their family records, but they could not find them and so were excluded from the priesthood as unclean."

How will the Jews be able to have priests serve in the temple? There's always a way around it. Man will do what is right in his own eyes. And it's not beyond the possibility of some religious figure in Israel saying that he received a revelation from God giving him an updated version of the lineage of the existing Jews today.

It won't matter in the long run. There is only one true priest who ministers on our behalf and that is Christ. Men will always make attempts to cling to the worldly ways in favor of heavenly things from the one true God.

HEB 7:18-19 "The former regulation 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."

There you have it. God who instituted the first priesthood to point to Christ, is the same God who set it aside in favor of a better hope by which we draw near to Himself. And the reason is because the law made nothing perfect.

Where is the hope there? The only hope the law gave is that God's promises would be fulfilled in another. It always pointed to another. Our better hope is found in Christ Himself.

Verse 19 also tells us that there is no other way to draw near to God unless it's through the better hope which is found in the better covenant; the New covenant found in the blood of Christ who is our high priest.

He's the only way we can draw near to God. Paul brings this out in ROM 5:1-2 "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through

whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God."

Another contrast our writer makes between the two priesthods is how they were entered into.

HEB 7:20-22 "And it was not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath, 21 but he 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.'" (Psalm 110:4) 22 Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant."

Notice who was making the oath; the Father. The Father did not personally give an oath to the priests of Aaron. They became priests entirely on the fact that they were born into that line.

Christ was personally chosen and given an oath that He would be the Father's personal choice for you and me. The priesthood of Aaron is not eternal, but Christ is.

HEB 7:22 "Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant."

The word for guarantee or surety is *egguos* in the Greek and means "under good security." Vincent in his Word Studies in the N.T. comments on this phrase "giving in surety." "The idea underlying all these words is that of putting something into one's hand (hollow of the hand) as a pledge."

In a sense it's as though Jesus was put into the hollow of the Father's hand for us and said, 'Father receive Me as the pledge of a better covenant on behalf of Your people.'

You and I could have no greater pledge, no greater guarantee that He will bring us to Himself and assure us that the covenant in His blood will be effectual for our salvation.

If you've ever wondered, is my salvation secure?, look to your guarantee in Christ, who is an infinitely better High Priest. We see this comparison in the next verses.

HEB 7:23-25 "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 (Or forever) those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them."

Priests, by the very nature of their office, intercede on behalf of others. If you lived in Israel in the days of the Levitical priesthood, you might have seen one, two or ten different high priests represent you before God, because they would eventually die or retire and someone would take their place.

And the one who took the others' place was not a guarantee that they were a better intercessor. It wasn't the character of their person that was the final determining factor, it was their physical lineage.

Not so with Christ. It is precisely because of His character and not His physical lineage that we can be assured of our High Priest being the perfect representative. His character is perfect because He is God, and He abides as our priest forever.

And because He is a priest forever, the nature of His office is eternal which is why He is able to save forever or completely. There is no doubt of whether or not our High Priest will bring us home to be with Him. It's assured.

That's why Paul could say in ROM 8:33-34 "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died - more than that, who was raised to life - is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us."

At this very moment Jesus is abiding in His priestly role for you and me. He is presently interceding for us and as a result we cannot be condemned because He has justified us. No one can unjustify us.

But just as surely as He does justify us, no earthly means can justify anyone, not even a God-ordained Levitical priesthood. He reserves that for only His Son to accomplish.

HEB 7:26-28 "Such a high priest meets our need - one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. 27 Unlike the other high priests, he 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, who has been made perfect forever."

Here again, our writer speaking to Jews reminds them of the difference between a priest in Israel, who received his office

through being born into the family of Aaron, and our High Priest Jesus "who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens."

No mere Priest can claim such a position before God, not even Melchizedek. The other priests were born into this world as sinners which is why they too had to offer up sacrifices for their own sins before offering sacrifices on behalf of the people. And their sacrifices were to be continual. Year after year they would go on.

Not so with Jesus. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. There was no other priesthood in Israel where the priest offered himself for the people. Not even Melchizedek is seen as a type offering up himself. Only Jesus can claim such a high position that would please the Father.

Only Jesus was spoken of in the O.T. as Priest as well as sacrifice. The Jews in Israel could never get past that. They could not imagine that their Messiah would be their High Priest and sacrifice. They wanted a warrior King not a suffering servant. They didn't realize that to receive Him as Warrior King meant acknowledging Him as suffering servant who came into this world to die for the penalty of sinners.

Christ will come back as Warrior King, but He must first be embraced as the sacrificial lamb who died and then rose from the dead. It's not as though Israel was without evidence and hope when it came to their King coming as a servant. Isaiah spoke very clearly of this.

ISA 53:1-11 "Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? 2 He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. 3 He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. 4 Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. 6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. 7 He was

oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. 8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. 9 He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. 10 Yet it was the LORD'S will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. 11 After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied by his knowledge that my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities."

This is why our writer is so excited. He knows that all Jews everywhere look for the Messiah. But he knows that the Messiah has come, unlike many Jews, who were looking for a Messiah made in their image. They missed the vital link between Priest and Sacrifice.

Jesus was both and because He lives we have the better hope of life eternal because He is that life. Eternal life is not simply a better quality of life it is being united to God who is eternal life. That life is found in Christ alone who said, "I am the way and the truth and the life, no man comes to the Father except by Me."

It may be difficult for us to wade through some of this as we consider priesthoods, and physical descents, the law and all that went into making Israel unique as a people called out by God.

But what our writer desires to do; no what the Holy Spirit desires to do, as He gives us this word from Hebrews, is to drive the point home of how blessed we are to have a God who does not make promises which are merely limited to this world. Our hope is not of this world. It is eternal in nature.

And because our hope is eternal our eyes need to be on eternal things. We live in a physical world with physical limitations. We are given a charge by Christ Himself to go out into this world and make disciples of all the nations. But for all that we are to be doing in this world, this present cursed world is not our home.

As real as this physical world is there is a physical world to come that is even more real because it will never end, unlike this present

world. This is the world that Abraham understood to be crafted by the architect and builder who is God Himself.

This is the world that Isaiah prophesied in **Isaiah 66:22** ²² "For just as the new heavens and the new earth which I make will endure before Me," declares the LORD, "So your offspring and your name will endure.

It is the same world Peter addresses in his second epistle.

2 Peter 3:13 ¹³ But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

And it is this same world to come that Jesus promises us in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 21:1-5 ^{NAU} Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, ⁴ and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." ⁵ And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

This is where our salvation is going. It is moving toward a life with our risen Savior who has redeemed a people for Himself and who will redeem the entire universe in which we'll live in our resurrected bodies.

Romans 8:19-23 ¹⁹ For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. ²³ And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

You and I are in a spiritual battle everyday of our lives. Our High Priest who sits on His throne above the heavens is interceding for us continually.

If you've ever wondered how He intercedes for you and me you might get a glimpse of it in the prayer He prayed before He went to the cross. It's a lengthy passage but well worth our paying attention to.

JOH 17:6-26 "I have revealed your name to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. 7 Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. 8 For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. 9 I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. 10 All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. 11 I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name - the name you gave me - so that they may be one as we are one. 12 While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled. 13 "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. 14 I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. 15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. 17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. 19 For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. 20 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: 23 I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. 24 "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. 25 "Righteous Father,

though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. 26 I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

His intercession is infinitely greater than simply making requests of the Father for you and me. But we get a glimpse of His heart for us in that prayer. We also know that that prayer was followed by His death. And we know that there is no greater love than that a man lay down his life for his friends. But praise God that Jesus rose bodily from the grave. He's alive!

Jesus Christ is our friend, our Priest, our King, our Lord, our Savior. He is our God. We are ever on His heart and He is with us today in whatever situation we may find ourselves. He knows and He cares. May we follow our High Priest and King; the One who has perfected forever our place with Him forever.

Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. Our High Priest Jesus will not let that happen. He's bringing us home and the wait is worth it as we keep our eyes on Him. May we love and serve Him faithfully until that day.