

Hebrews 7:11-28 to 8:1-13

In our last lesson in Hebrews Chapter 7, the writer used a most convincing but unusual argument to prove that Melchizedek was superior to Levi.

I say unusual because he refers to a truth that is quite unfamiliar to us today.

He makes reference to it in Hebrews 7:9-10:

"And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham.

¹⁰ **For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him."**

He had just proven that Melchizedek was superior to Abraham on the grounds that Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek.

Thus far we would consider his argument a logical one.

However, having established that basic fact, the writer goes on to prove that Melchizedek was superior to Levi on the same grounds that he was superior to Abraham.

Now that seems quite impossible, considering the fact that Levi was not even born when Abraham met Melchizedek.

However, he maintains that Levi **"--was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him."**

So, on the basis of that argument, Levi was proven to be inferior to Melchizedek because he **"paid tithes in Abraham."**

And apparently the Hebrews receiving this epistle were willing to accept that argument, thus proving that they

accepted the principle that the actions of the forefathers could be attributed to the children.

I know this seems strange to our ears, but as we noted in the last week's lesson, this same principle is also applied in Romans 5:19.

There it affects the whole human race through our father Adam.

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners --."

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So then, it is a principle grounded in the Word of God, and by that principle the writer of Hebrews proves that Levi and the whole Levitical priesthood is inferior to the priesthood of Melchizedek.

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This was a rather bold statement to make to the Hebrew Christians.

However, the writer of Hebrews had a specific reason in mind when he proved the inferiority of the Levitical priesthood.

Hebrews 7:11: **"If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?"**

Here, the writer is again referring to Psalm 110:4: **"The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."**

And the point he is making is that the Levitical priesthood must have been

imperfect, and therefore temporary, or God would not have referred to another priesthood.

And if the Levitical priesthood was temporary, then the dispensation of Law was also temporary, for, indeed, the two were intimately connected.

As Hebrews 7:12 says, **"For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law."**

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And there definitely was a change in the priesthood.

Jesus' priesthood is after the order of Melchizedek which is completely different.

However, the manner in which Christ performs His priestly ministry is of the same

character as that of the Aaronic
priesthood.

Nevertheless, Jesus Himself does not belong
to that order, as He did not come from
the priestly tribe of Levi.

V 13-14 **"For he of whom these things are
spoken (that is Christ) pertaineth to
another tribe, of which no man gave
attendance at the altar.**

¹⁴ **For it is evident that our Lord
sprang out of Juda; of which tribe
Moses spake nothing concerning
priesthood."**

So, according to Levitical law, our Lord had
no title to the earthly priesthood.

During His life as a Jewish citizen, He
would not have qualified as a priest of
the Levitical order.

But by divine oath, Christ is made a priest of a higher order, an order that is superior to and one which replaces the Levitical priesthood.

V 15-17 **"And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest,**

¹⁶ **Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.**

¹⁷ **For he testifieth (that is God testifies) Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."** -- referring again to Psalm 110:4

V 18-19 **"For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.**

¹⁹ **For the law made nothing perfect,**

but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God."

So the old order has been set aside.

It was weak and unprofitable in the sense that it could not accomplish what was needed.

It could not cleanse the sinner from his sins, but only covered that sin until the real "**Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world**" should appear.

It made nothing perfect; therefore it had to give way to the introduction of a better hope by which we draw nigh to God.

So, the Aaronic priesthood must give way to a better priesthood and a better High Priest, Jesus Christ.

And not only was Christ's priesthood completely different, but it was instituted in a superior way.

The priests of old received their office by inheritance from their fathers.

Christ was made a priest by divine oath.

V 20-22 **"And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest:**

²¹ (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord swear and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of **Melchisedec:**)"--from Psalm 110:4

²² **"By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament."**

So by God's oath He became the High Priest of a better order, and **"after the power of an endless life."**

Yes, He was made a Priest in the power of
the resurrection.

So He will remain our High Priest throughout
eternity.

This was certainly not the case in the old
Levitical order.

V 23 **"And they truly were many priests,
because they were not suffered to
continue by reason of death."**

This, of course, was one of the weaknesses
of the Levitical priesthood.

Even when Israel had a good high priest,
they could never be sure what the
future would bring.

And certainly there had been bad priests in
their history.

For instance, Eli's sons, Hophni and
Phinehas, were evil men, but they were
priests until God judged them.

They were priests, because they inherited the honour.

1 Samuel 2:12: **"Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD."**

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On the other hand, Jesus has an unchangeable priesthood, instituted by the oath of God, and after the order of Melchizedek.

V 24-25 **"But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.**
²⁵ **Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."**

Not only is He our sacrifice for sin, but He is everlastingly there to intercede on our behalf.

The word "**uttermost**," found in V 25,

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost," does not only mean salvation from every kind of sin, but it means salvation forevermore.

We are saved eternally because Jesus Who died for us also lives to keep us.

Because He is eternal, He is able to complete the work He began.

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Philippians 1:6

He is the unchanging High Priest Who gives to ruined sinners a perfect representation before the throne of God.

V 26 **"For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate**

from sinners, and made higher than the heavens."

He is everything that we are not.

And He is all this for us.

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Nor is it necessary that He offer daily sacrifices, as the high priests of old did.

They offered for their own sins, for they were themselves unclean, and then they offered on behalf of the people.

But these sacrifices never settled the sin question.

That's why they were never ending.

However, Jesus, having once offered up Himself on the cross, offered no more, but sat down on the right hand of God.

He had completed the work of salvation, and settled the sin question for all eternity.

V 27 **"Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself."**

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*♪ Now we are free, there's no condemnation!
Jesus provides a perfect salvation;
'Come onto Me' O hear His sweet call!
Come, and He saves us once for all.*

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V 27 also says **"he offered up himself."**

He voluntarily **"offered up himself"** as our sin offering on the cross of Calvary. It wasn't the Jews or the Roman government that put Christ on the cross.

At any point, He could have called "twelve legions of angels," but He didn't.

Jesus voluntarily "**offered up himself**" on the brazen altar of Calvary.

As He said in John 10:17-18, "**Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.**

¹⁸ **No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."**

He "**offered up himself**" voluntarily.

He made one sacrifice, and then He said "**It is finished.**"

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Yes, salvation is the finished work of Christ.

But as our Great High Priest, He is now engaged in His unfinished work, the work that will never be completed as long as any of His redeemed are in the place of testing and in need of His help.

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V 28 **"For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore."**

What more could the Holy Spirit have said to make clear the superiority of Christ's priesthood, and consequently the superiority of the new dispensation over the old?

But it would be hard, even for converted
Hebrews, to fully realize this
tremendous change.

So, with great care, the Holy Spirit covers
each detail in an effort to deliver
them from Judaism and bring them out
into the full light and liberty of
Christianity.

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In Chapter 8, which we will be beginning
today, he summarizes all that has been
said concerning the priesthood of Jesus
Christ.

V 1-2 " **Now of the things which we have
spoken this is the sum: We have such an
high priest, who is set on the right
hand of the throne of the Majesty in
the heavens;**

² **A minister of the sanctuary, and of**

the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man."

Yes, **"We have such an high priest"** as no other people ever had.

All others were merely types and shadows of this High Priest.

He is absolutely fitted and completely sufficient in all the purposes of a high priest, both with respect to the honour of God and the well-being of those that He has redeemed.

The high priests of old went into the Holy of Holies, which is a type of heaven, only once every year.

Our Lord is continually **"on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens."**

He is there as our Mediator, and He is possessed with all authority and power in heaven and on the earth.

And, He exercises this authority for the glory of His Father, His own honour, and for the well-being of all who belong to Him.

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V 2 says--"**A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.**"

We cannot go into a detailed study of the tabernacle in this lesson.

So, briefly, let me say it consisted of a fenced courtyard, with the tabernacle, or tent, near one end.

In front of the tabernacle was the brazen altar where the sacrifices were burned.

This open courtyard outside the tabernacle pictured Christ's priestly work on this earth, where He offered up Himself on the cross, the brazen altar, and became **"sin for us."**

However, He is not now in the courtyard, but in the Holy of Holies, the true tabernacle in heaven, seated at the right hand of the Father, taking care of His people's affairs.

There He intercedes for the redeemed that their persons and praises might be accepted through the merit of His own sacrifice.

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V 3 **"For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer."**

In the old economy, whatever the people brought to be presented to God, whether it be sacrifices for sin, peace offerings, or thank-offerings, they must be offered by the priest.

He was to make atonement for their guilt by the blood of the sacrifice, and perfume their gifts and services with his holy incense, thereby making the person and his gift acceptable.

So, what does our Great High Priest have to offer?

Of course, first of all, He offered His own body and precious blood on the cross, the brazen altar of sacrifice.

Hebrews 10:5: **“---Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me.”**

But also, as He ministers in the heavenly
sanctuary today, it is necessary that
He have somewhat to offer.

And He does.

He presents before God our prayers and
praises.

Yes, our heartfelt worship ascends to the
Father by Him.

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*♪ Our great High Priest is sitting
At God's right hand above;
For us His hands uplifted
In sympathy and love.*

*To all our prayers and praises
Christ adds His sweet perfume,
And love the censor raises
These odours to consume.*

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We cannot think of approaching God, or
presenting anything to Him, but in and
through Christ.

We come depending upon His merits and
mediation to be accepted in the
Beloved.

He mingles the incense of His own
righteousness and merits with all that
His people offer to God by Him, and by
so doing, makes them acceptable.

We might often be discouraged when we
realize the imperfections that creep
even into our highest and best efforts
to glorify God.

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*"Sin twines itself about my thoughts,
And slides into my prayers."*

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But it is blessed to know that nothing reaches God that is not perfect. Our Great High Priest takes out of our prayers and praises everything that is unholy or of the flesh, and adds the incense of His own perfections.

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Christ's Priesthood is altogether Heavenly in its character.

We see that in verses 4-5

**"For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:
5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things--."**

This does not mean that Jesus never acted in a priestly capacity while on this earth, for He certainly did.

For instance, as a Priest, He prayed for His disciples.

In John 17, we have a wonderful example of His High-Priestly intercession.

And as we have already noted, while on this earth, He offered Himself upon the cross as the supreme sacrifice for sin.

But the point being made here is that His entire Priesthood is heavenly in character.

It was not inherited from the Aaronic order. So, looked at from that standpoint, He would not be a priest here on this earth, as He did not belong to the tribe of Levi or the household of Aaron.

But, He is our Great High Priest, fulfilling the types and shadows of heavenly things spoken of in the tabernacle.

Everything in the tabernacle and its service were foreshadowings of Christ. They picture His glorious Person and wondrous work.

In fact, that was the reason why God was so particular that Moses have the tabernacle built exactly to His specifications.

V 5 **--as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount."**

There was no room for human ingenuity or for Moses' own thoughts in that plan.

All must be as ordered by God, for only He knew the Son and the work He was to accomplish.

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V 6 **"But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises."**

The types and shadows are now gone, being replaced by the dispensation of grace. Christ has entered into a better ministry, being the Mediator of a better covenant established on better promises.

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And these three words, **"a better covenant,"** launch us upon a new study that will take the rest of this chapter, and will take us into the next lesson.

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V 6-13 **"But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is**

the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

⁷ For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

⁸ For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

⁹ Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their

hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

¹¹ And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

¹² For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

¹³ In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."

Up to this point in Hebrews, the writer has been proving that Christ is a superior High Priest.

And, in consequence, the dispensation of grace is superior to and replaces the dispensation of Law.

This emphasis has not changed, and indeed
V 13 comes to this conclusion.

**"In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath
made the first old. Now that which
decayeth and waxeth old is ready to
vanish away."**

And so it is natural to assume that this new
covenant, which is sealed by the shed
blood of Jesus Christ, pertains to the
church, which is His body.

In fact, some of the characteristics of this
new covenant as described in V 10, **"I
will put my laws into their mind, and
write them in their hearts: and I will
be to them a God, and they shall be to
me a people"** describe the covenant of
grace to a "T."

Now the church of Jesus Christ needs teachers and preachers to instruct them in the Word.

However, as V 10 indicates, the indwelling Holy Spirit is the resident teacher of each believer.

1 John 2:27 verifies this: **"But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him."**

Also, V 12 indicates, that this new covenant provides forgiveness of sin: **"and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."**

This is an essential ingredient in our
salvation and the covenant of grace.

So the new covenant bears the same
characteristics as, and no doubt are
in, the covenant of grace.

It is a covenant purchased by the blood of
Christ, and to which the church is a
beneficiary.

Under the Law, the promise of blessing
rested upon man's ability to claim it,
and so the old covenant was imperfect
and ineffectual to meet man's needs.

Therefore, God in His mercy gave us this new
covenant, and a new Mediator.

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But this is only half of the story
concerning the new covenant.

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Just as the Lord's Supper was taken from the remnants of the Passover feast, and our precious Saviour is the promised Messiah of Israel, so there are many links between God's earthly chosen people and His heavenly chosen people. This is true in the case of the new covenant also.

A close look at God's Word will show us that Hebrews 8:8-12, which we have just read, is a direct quote from Jeremiah 31:31-34.

Let's look at some of these verses in Jeremiah 31 beginning at V 31:

"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

³² Not according to the covenant that

I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:"

I'll just stop there.

Now, I ask you, could there be a passage more Jewish than that?

It is written to "**the house of Israel**" and "**the house of Judah.**"

It refers to their fathers as the ones that He took by the hand and brought "--**out of the land of Egypt.**"

So even though the book of Hebrews indicates that the new covenant benefits the church of Jesus Christ, undoubtedly there is still a part, and a very important part, reserved for God's ancient people Israel.

Next week, we will have another look at this
new covenant which was purchased by the
blood of Jesus Christ.