

The Superiority of Christ

Jesus - Better Than Aaron and the Priesthood Hebrews 4:14-5:10

Introduction

So far in this series on the Superiority of Christ, we have seen that Christ is better than the:

- a) the prophets – Heb. 1:1-3
- b) the angels – Heb. 1:4-2:18
- c) Moses and the Law – Heb. 3:1-5
- d) Joshua and the Promised Land Rest Heb. 4:1-6

Jesus is better than Aaron and the Levitical Priesthood - Heb 5:1-10; 7:1-28. Step by step, the writer of the book of Hebrews shows us the superiority of Christ over every part of Judaism.

In this lesson, we will learn how Jesus is qualified to be our High Priest by virtue of His calling, mission, and suffering. We will also see that Jesus is a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. And we will see that the priestly order of Melchizedek is superior to the priesthood of Aaron by examining Abraham's encounter with Melchizedek in Hebrews Chapter 7.

There are several things the writer wants us to consider:

- The Levitical priesthood could not make anyone perfect before God.
- The Law based upon the Levitical priesthood has been annulled.
- Christ provides "a better hope, through which we draw near to God."

Chapter 4, verse 14 begins, "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. 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." ([Hebrews 4:14-16 NKJV](#))

The writer begins by calling our attention to the specific and unique character of Jesus as our High Priest. No other High Priest was ever called great. No other High Priest ever passed through the heavens. No other High Priest was ever the Son of God. So the writer tells us to hold fast our confession knowing that we have a High Priest that has ascended into heaven and now intercedes on our behalf.

As our High Priest, Jesus understands and represents us. Verse 15 says, "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." ([Hebrews 4:15 NKJV](#))

In Chapter One, the writer documents the deity of Jesus. In Chapter Two, he details the humanity of Jesus. Now he reveals Jesus, as the Son of God, enthroned in

heaven, a High Priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses. The ancient Greek word for sympathize literally means "to suffer along with." Jesus added humanity to His deity and came and lived among us as a man.

Jesus also knows what it means to be tempted. Sometimes we think that because Jesus is God, He could never know temptation the way we do. But Jesus faced temptation much more severely than we ever have or ever will. As the Sinless One, Jesus knows temptation in a way we never will. Only the one who never gives in to temptation knows the full strength of temptation. Jesus knew the strength and fury of temptation in a way, and to a degree, that we can never know. Jesus knows what we go through, and He has faced worse.

Jesus offers us an invitation to come to the throne of grace. Verse 16 says, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." ([Hebrews 4:16 NKJV](#))

We have a High Priest who is powerful yet compassionate, and He invites us to come boldly to His throne. Satan wants us to believe Jesus is unapproachable and powerless to help us. But the New Testament truth is that Jesus now sits on the throne of grace and offers us the incredible benefits and blessings of heaven. Through the sacrifice and victory of Christ, we obtain mercy (which means we do not get what we deserve), and we also find grace (which is getting what we don't deserve).

Rabbis taught that God had two thrones, one of mercy and one of judgment. They knew that God was both merciful and just, but they couldn't seem to reconcile these two attributes of God. So they concluded that God had two thrones. One throne where He would show mercy and the other where He would show judgment. In reality, the finished work of Jesus resolves both mercy and judgment at one throne of grace. That doesn't mean grace ignores justice. Actually, grace fulfills God's justice because of the Cross.

Thankfully, Jesus provides help for us in our time of need. No request is too large or too small for God. [Philippians 4:6](#) says, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." ([Philippians 4:6-7 NKJV](#))

This promise is assured by our great High Priest, Jesus Christ.

But how can Jesus be our High Priest when He is from the tribe of Judah rather than the tribe of Levi? Chapter 5 gives us the answer. It says, "For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things *pertaining* to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. Because of this, he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer *sacrifices* for sins. And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron *was*. So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High

Priest, *but it* was He who said to Him: "YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU." As *He* also *says* in another place: "YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK"; who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, *yet* He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest "ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK" (Hebrews 5:1-10 NKJV)

Hebrews Chapter 7 explains how this came about. The Hebrew writer demonstrates the superiority of Christ's priesthood by pointing out that Jesus' appointment to the priesthood is better than Aaron's. The first few verses of Chapter 7 describe the Priesthood of Melchizedek. "For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated "king of righteousness," and then also king of Salem, meaning "king of peace," without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually. Now consider how great this man *was*, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham; but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better. Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he *receives them*, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him." (Hebrews 7:1-10 NKJV)

This incredible passage of scripture is packed with natural and spiritual insight. Verse 20 tells us how this divine appointment came about.

I. Christ's Divine Appointment (20-22)

It says, "And inasmuch as *He (Jesus) 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 NKJV)

Levitical priests were appointed by heritage and commandment. Aaron and his descendants served in the Levitical priesthood by birthright according to the command of God in Exodus 28:1-4. God divinely appointed them. The Levites didn't take an oath of office; God appointed and commanded them to be priests.

But Jesus was made a priest with an oath which King David refers to in Psalm 110

verse 4, when he says, "The LORD has sworn And will not relent, "You *are* a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek." (Psalms 110:4 NKJV)

Jesus is both God's promise and guarantee of a better priesthood. The Godhead decided Christ's divine office of High Priest long before the world was ever created. Christ's continuing intercession for us also illustrates the superiority of His priesthood.

II. Christ's Eternal Intercession (23-25)

The Levitical priests were limited in their service because they were only human. They would serve until their death, and then another priest would take their place. That meant there had to be many priests to perpetuate the priesthood.

Look at verse 23, "Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." (Hebrews 7:23-25 NKJV)

Jesus "ever lives" to make intercession for us!

In verse 11, it says, "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? For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. 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. 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. 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. 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 7:11-22 NKJV)

Since His ascension, Jesus "ever lives" to make intercession for us. Romans 8:35 says, "Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." (Romans 8:34 NKJV)

Verse 26 says, "But He (Jesus), because He continues forever, has an

unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For such a High Priest was fitting for us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, *appoints* the Son who has been perfected forever." (Hebrews 7:24-28 NKJV)

Jesus is a high priest who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Yet, He reaches down to meet our needs. He came "according to the power of an endless life" and has been given an "unchangeable priesthood," making Him "able to save completely those who come to God through Him." Jesus is able to do what the law could not do - make us "righteous" in the eyes of God. Because of Calvary, God sees us as holy and blameless in Christ.

The Apostle Paul tells the Colossian believers, "And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight— if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister." (Colossians 1:21-23 NKJV)

Jesus accomplishes this because He ever lives to make intercession for us. What Jesus is doing for us now, He is most willing to do! So we see that Jesus has a better appointment, a better intercession, and finally, He is a better representative than anyone from the Levitical priesthood of Aaron.

III. Christ Is God's Perfect Representative (26-27)

The Levitical priests were sinners like everyone else. Some were bigger sinners than others, but even the best of them had to "offer up sacrifices" daily for their own sins before offering sacrifices on behalf of the people.

But the eternal priesthood of Christ was different. Jesus was sinless. His character was holy and His life undefiled. He did not need to offer sacrifices for Himself, making him the perfect eternal high priest.

The Levitical priests offered sacrifices daily for themselves. Since they had to be continually offered, there was a fundamental weakness in the ability and power of the sacrifices themselves.

One of the problems was that animal sacrifices were insufficient to cleanse their conscience of sins. Hebrews 10:1 says, "For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach

perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those *sacrifices there is* a reminder of sins every year. For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins." (Hebrews 10:1-4 NKJV)

But Jesus offered Himself "once for all!" His sacrifice removes our sins from us and purifies our conscience. When you invite Jesus into your life, He has the ability and power to dramatically change your life. His sacrifice on the Cross is sufficient to give you a completely new and better life.

Conclusion

Verse 28 summarizes the contrast between the two priesthoods, "For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, *appoints* the Son who has been perfected forever." (Hebrews 7:28 NKJV)

The Law could only point out that you were a sinner, and the Sacrificial System could only cover that sin with a substitute; it could not remove it. But Jesus became the sacrifice that removes sin and the High Priest who accepts, forgives, and cleanses you from your sins.

The Levitical priests were sinners themselves, and death terminated their service. Their sacrifices could not remove sin, so they repeated the daily and yearly sacrifices. But the priesthood of Christ is an eternal priesthood, determined by Divine appointment and sworn to by an oath long before Aaron was ever born. And the priestly intercession by Christ on our behalf cannot be limited by death! His sacrifice is a permanent one, offered once for all when He offered Himself.

If you're in need of forgiveness today, or want to live a changed life, come to Jesus and ask Him to help you! Jesus Christ is our High Priest, and He is interceding on your behalf! All you need to do is what Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16 NKJV)

Jesus will never turn you away!