

jesus priest

hebrews 7

Find your way to Hebrews chapter 7 this morning. At the end of the last chapter a new section of the book began that talks a lot about Jesus' position as High Priest in heaven. There are some good thoughts for us to tackle today, so let's look at our text and see what we see.

Hebrews 7.1-28 - 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.

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.

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.

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.

In these verses there's quite a bit of discussion about the philosophy of the priesthood. That's not something we're usually too concerned with from our position as Protestant Evangelicals, but remember - the immediate recipients of this letter were Hebrew Christians who were having to come to grips with the shift their theology was undergoing. The idea of the human priesthood being abolished for a Jew who had lived under the law is no small thing. When that individual became a Christian and these new understandings were taught to them, there was a radical shakeup of their traditions and culture. This idea would've been a significant mental hurdle to overcome for a Jew.

I think we evangelicals have a hurdle of our own on the subject, or at least we can if we're not careful. Because when we hear the word 'priest' or 'priesthood,' we immediately think of Catholicism and the negative implementations of the priesthood in human history and human religion.

If you're like me, you think, "I don't need a priest." But the truth is, we do. We need a priest very much. We need a bridge between God and us because sin has introduced an incredible gap that separates us from heaven.

Jesus said that if we want to enter heaven after this life we have to be *perfect*. And He said that our righteousness has to *exceed* that of the Scribes and Pharisees. He often said things that caused His listeners to say, "Well, if that's true, no one can be saved!" And that's the point. The gap between us and God is too far for us to be saved unless God builds a bridge to us and establishes a priest that can bring us atonement and show us the way across.

We can't just recognize that God exists and then say, "Ok God, I know You're there, so that's it, right? We're cool now, aren't we?"

God would say no. Because it's not enough to just believe there is a God. We have to be *saved* by Him.

As we see here, we are saved through God's High Priest. Jesus is that One Person who can build the bridge from heaven to us and then bring us atonement so that we can be made right. The text says that He is perfect, separate from sinners, yet we know from chapter 2 that He was also made like us in every way so that He *could* become our priest and make a final, all-covering atonement for our sins.

Now, we're not under the Levitical law, we can relate to God as Father and Friend, yet we must also relate to Him as priest. And that's a relationship we're not always very used to or fond of.

You know, especially around here, when it comes to our culture and mindset we cherish personal liberty, personal responsibility, personal achievement. When someone says, "That business...you didn't build that," many people were offended and outraged because it struck at something in the core of our human values.

But we have to understand that the individualistic mindset is the opposite of the priestly relationship and the opposite of salvation. I cannot save myself. I cannot bring hope to myself. I cannot spiritually transform my own life. I must have someone greater than me provide what is necessary for my salvation and edification and transformation and I have to go along with what that Person says and does, otherwise I'm lost.

The whole idea of a priest is that you go to that person and humbly say to them, "I need You. I need You to cover my sin. I need You to build a bridge for me to God. Tell me what to do so that I can be safe."

When men put *themselves* in that place, it's wrong. It's unbiblical. It's wicked. Because our text points out that God has finally established a perfect, never-dying High Priest in Jesus Christ. And He is where we find our hope and our salvation. We cannot find it on our own through luck or hard work or the American dream or anything else. The only source for that covering and that hope is by going to God's High Priest.

And here's the other idea that presented as the author expounds on this topic: A priest is greater than you. He's not your employee. A priest is higher and greater than the person coming to them.

There in the text we're given the example of Abraham. Abraham had just come from this great rescue mission. He had won back the captives and taken spoils of war and overcome these wicked armies. He had become a successful warrior, he was a man of wealth. He was the man who had the heavenly promise.

But then he crosses paths with Melchizedek. And Abraham had the understanding that, on the spiritual level, he needed to humble himself and make offerings to the Lord through this man. He wanted the blessing that God would give through this mysterious priest.

He didn't say, "Hey buddy, I'm God's friend! He's made promises to me. He's cool with whatever I do. I just let Him know what I'm up to and He signs off on it." Instead, Abraham understood that God institutes systems and situations and then calls us to submit to them so that He can change the uttermost parts of us and bless us. So, Abraham went and gave of the richest spoils of his conquest to the Lord through Melchizedek and was then able to receive a special heavenly blessing. Even though he was God's friend. Even though God sometimes came down and talked with him face to face, there was still a need for a priest and Abraham humbled himself and submitted to it.

The Book of Hebrews shows how Christ has been put in the place of High Priest forever. There's no more need for the Sons of Aaron. There's no need for a human priest, because we have Jesus, the God-Man, who is the perfect, ultimate High Priest.

And in this text we're able to see not only that Christ is greater than any human high priest, but how different His priesthood is.

A human priest is a perpetual reminder of your failings and your condemnation. Whether it's in the tabernacle or down at the local Saint Mary's, a human priest is the constant reminder of the fact that you don't measure up.

But Jesus, in His priesthood, doesn't bring perpetual condemnation, but instead He brings a new covenant that saves us not for a week or until next confession, but He saves us to the uttermost and He brings us real, lasting, effective hope.

A human priest cannot do that. Because a human priest is mortal and imperfect. But Christ is a priest who is infallible and perfect. And that's the culmination of the thoughts for us this morning.

In order for us to be saved, there must be a perfect bridge between us and God. Built from heaven's side toward us and we must walk across that bridge that God has provided, not one we construct ourselves.

Jesus is that perfect bridge. Now, salvation is free. It's by grace. It's open and available. But in order for us to get to God, we must cross the bridge He's provided, meaning we have to go through Jesus. That means it's not enough to just acknowledge that Jesus exists. Even the demons believe Jesus is the Son of God. It means that as we approach God as Father and Friend we must also approach Him as priest, because that is the position He is in.

If we were under a human priesthood, you would go to the priest and ask him, "What do I have to do to be right with God? What do I have to do to have my sins covered? What do I have to do to receive the blessings of heaven?" And then the priest would tell you.

We are, thankfully, not under a human priesthood, but that doesn't mean we don't submit to heaven's high priest as individuals. We're to go to Him in submission and ask what we must do to receive the hope and the blessing that He wants for us. We're to worship Him and lay down our lives and take His path to God, described by Redpath as the Royal Route To Heaven. Because that's the only way to get there.

And, since He is priest, He sets the path. As we read what He said in the word, as we see what He taught in the parables or the beatitudes and see what He says about how to walk in righteousness, we're to follow that path, doing what He says to do, thinking what He says to think.

If we want the uttermost parts of our lives touched and changed by God, then we must give the richest spoils of our lives to Him. We're commanded to give our whole selves as an offering. Not giving a tenth of our life and holding back the rest. We're to live life as a sacrifice to the Lord because we believe that He can do something better in us and through us than if we lived life on our own.

That's how we're brought into the wonderful new covenant that Jesus brings. And we'll see more of that incredible priestly work next week in chapter 8.