

Hebrews 7:20-28 ESV (Pg. 583) And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, **21** but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever.’” **22** This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant. **23** The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, **24** but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. **25** Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. **26** For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. **27** He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. **28** For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

- I. A couple weeks ago, we continued our series on the role of prophet, priest and king by looking at the Old Testament Levitical (or Aaronic) priests. As we did with the prophets, today we want to closely examine how Jesus perfectly fulfills the priesthood, relegating Old Testament priests to merely a shadow of his reality.
 - A. The passage we read is a sampling of one of Hebrews’ principle themes: that Jesus Christ is our great High Priest, replacing all other priests by proving them to be ineffective for our salvation, making them unnecessary and obsolete.
 1. Hebrews emphasizes this by pointing to a priest in the the Old Testament that predates Moses or Aaron, predates the Law, the sacrifices, the tabernacle, or the Levitical priesthood; a priest named Melchizedek.
 2. Melchizedek is a mysterious figure who’s very brief story is told in Genesis 14. 4 Kings had attacked Sodom, sacking the city, and taking Abram’s nephew, Lot, captive. Abram builds an army and marches out, defeats those kings and and delivers the people and their possessions from captivity.
 - B. **Genesis 14:17 ESV** After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet (Abram) at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King’s Valley). **18** And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) **19** And he blessed him and said, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; **20** and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!” And Abram gave him a tenth of everything. That is everything we know about Melchizedek in history, but the writer of Hebrews sees in him a glorious typology of the priesthood of Christ. Let’s examine how...
 1. Note that Melchizedek’s title was the “King of Salem”. It literally translates, “King of Peace”. Isaiah prophetically tells us one day a child will be born who will be called “Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, **Prince of Peace**”. Melchizedek’s name in Hebrew means the King of Righteousness. Jesus’ righteousness, not our works or merit, is the centerpiece of our salvation, and is without the smallest stain. By his substitutionary death, the King grants all of the merit of his perfect righteousness to any who would believe.

2. Salem, where Melchizedek dwelt, would later be renamed Jerusalem, “the City of Peace”. It was where God would choose to dwell in a Temple in the midst of his people. Now we are the temple of Christ. He dwells in us.
 3. He was the priest of God most High. This means that before God gave the Israelites the ordinances to govern the priesthood, this man was representing God to man, and meditating between Creator and creation.
 - a) Christ Jesus is the one who perfectly represents God to humanity. Paul says that in Christ, all of the fullness of the Trinity dwells in bodily form.
 - b) Christ also meditates between God and humanity by his sacrificial death and resurrection. John calls Christ our Advocate (lawyer) with the Father.
 4. Melchizedek brought out bread and wine to refresh Abram and to celebrate the victory. The bread and wine offered by this priest should remind us of the table where we gather every Sunday, sharing bread and cup, by which we are refreshed spiritually, and remember our Lord’s victory over sin and death.
 5. Melchizedek also blessed Abram. Though Abram was to be the Father of the Jews, he was blessed by this priest. The writer of Hebrews makes two points about this important action. First, Abram was the great-grandfather of Levi, from whom would come the Aaronic priests. By bestowing blessing on Abram, Melchizedek proves himself to be superior to the one he blesses.
 - a) Can a poor man bless a rich man with wealth? Does the injured man give healing to a wise surgeon? In receiving blessing, Abram obtains a benefit from someone greater and more generous than himself. **Hebrews 7:7 ESV** It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior.
 - b) Secondly, in grateful acknowledgement, Abram pays a love offering of 10% of the spoils of war to Melchizedek. Though the people of God would spring from Abram’s DNA, yet he pays tithes to someone outside of himself, outside of the covenant of the Law, or Levitical priesthood.
- C. All of these points become very important when we realize that Melchizedek is not mentioned again in scripture until we come to Psalm 110 where David, speaking prophetically of the Messiah, says **Psalm 110:4 ESV** The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.” The Messiah would be a priest, but not like the Levitical priests.
- II. This oath by God to Jesus, that he would forever be God’s appointed priest (mediator), is what makes Jesus entirely different from the others. “**And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever.’”**”
- A. The priests in the Tabernacle or at the Temple became priests because of an inherited right (they were born in Aaron’s line). Because of this, there were good and faithful priests, and there were corrupt and evil priests. But Jesus is a priest forever because God appointed him, guaranteeing his continuing ministry with an oath. God won’t change his mind. Now Jesus is our faithful priest forever.
1. This means that as long as God lives and is a God of truth, Jesus will not cease to intercede for mercy on behalf of his people. As long as God lives and reigns, the blood of Christ will be enough to cleanse the souls of all who believe. As long as God lives, death can’t grasp us in its fearsome claws.

2. God has guaranteed this by his reputation of holiness, truth, and faithfulness.
 - B. **“This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.”** Jeremiah’s prophecy contains indictments against the priests of his day (shepherds), who would abuse and exploit the sheep for their own advantage. The sheep were starving spiritually, while the priests were fat and happy. In Christ, those days are over!
 1. **Mark 10:45 ESV** **“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”** Because Jesus is our high priest, we are not the victims of bad shepherding. He is the Good Shepherd!
 2. How tragic is it then when we question the Lord’s steadfast love for us! The Bible tells us that he has engraved us into the palms of his hands, is a friend that sticks closer than a brother, and is an ever-present help in time of need!
 - a) When the world, your government, your job, your family, and your church are spinning out of control, Jesus is an anchor for our souls. There may be many things on which you cannot rely, but Jesus remains steadfast.
 - b) Don’t let your fears, doubts, and troubles become a breeding ground for accusations to form against Christ’s love for you! He is your priest forever. In his steadfast love, he will not leave you or forsake you.
 - C. This was not the case with the Levitical priests. It wasn’t just their corruption that made them ineffective, but also their mortality. **“The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever.”**
 1. Priests would come and go; living, serving, dying and being replaced by the next guy. Have you ever had a great leader who was taken from you? A pastor who moved to the next assignment? The teacher you left behind when you moved to the next class? Well death is the ultimate separator! Those of you who have lost parents or grandparents really understand this.
 2. But Christ’s priesthood is not only guaranteed by God’s oath but by his continuing life. Jesus defeated death in human flesh, and has now purchased everlasting life for all those who believe. He cannot be separated from us as our priest, and we cannot be separated from him as his people.
- III. The implications of this reality are staggering! **“Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.”** Mentally pause for a moment and consider the words “save to the uttermost”. Honestly ask yourself, “Where or how do I need to be saved? Where is my salvation not complete?” Some of us have such a limited view of salvation. As long as we’re sure we’re not going to Hell, we don’t worry much.
- A. But the Bible talks about people being delivered from fear, despair and depression, injustice, sickness, doubt, and poverty; not to mention sin, iniquity and transgressions of all shapes and sizes. Where do you need to be saved?
 1. We have before us a promise that Jesus’ unending life is a guarantee that we can be saved, not just on the abstract spiritual surface (where we float up to heaven when we die), but here and now, an to the uttermost of possibility!
 2. Do you dare believe this? Do you believe that Jesus, by his resurrection power, can fix what’s broken in you? That he can redeem your childhood, stabilize your emotions, cause you to release your past, conquer nasty habits, increase faith, make you more loving, and give peace to your heart?

- a) These are serious questions we all must consider seriously. Why do we settle for a safe religious experience, instead of throwing ourselves into the loving care of our merciful High Priest who is mighty to save?
 - b) I don't want to come to the end of my life only to realize how much grace was available for my great need, and how little I cried out for it. **"I have a great need for Christ: I have a great Christ for my need."** -C.H. Spurgeon
- B. He next describes Jesus Christ with wonderful adjectives, and says it was fitting for Christ to be like this for us. **"For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens."** Why would such a Priest be fitting for us?
- 1. Because we are unholy, guilty, and defiled. We are born of, attracted to, victimized by and constantly victimizing sinners. In our unregenerate state, we are not exalted above the heavens, but condemned to judgement in hell.
 - 2. It is fitting to have a high priest like him because he is nothing like us, except in the flesh he took upon himself out of mercy. I would never go to a mechanic that only knew as much about cars as I do. I would never consult a doctor who dropped out of middle school. Why would I want a priest to mediate between the Father and I who was as wicked and depraved as me?
- C. This was the problem with the old priesthood. **"(Christ) has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself"**.
- 1. The old priests had to get over the hurdle of their own sins first before they could do anything about yours or mine! But not so with Christ. He went to the cross as an innocent man, yet upon that cross offered a fully effective sacrifice, for all time, and for everyone who will put their trust in him.
 - 2. My three favorite words to describe the sacrifice of Jesus are repeated 4 times in the book of Hebrews: **"Once for all"**. These words tell me Jesus' work was sufficient, complete, with nothing ever to be added to it.
- IV. The fact of our great High Priest should inspire real worship when we consider it. He has superseded (by far) anything that the law provided through the Old Testament priesthood. **"For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever."** The Law gave us men who were both mortal and sinful. But God's sworn oath, "You are a Priest forever!", appoints a faithful Son.
- A. When the writer says that Jesus has been made perfect forever, it isn't implying that there was a time when Christ was less than perfect. It is saying that before his life of perfect obedience, culminating in his death on the cross, Jesus ministry as our high priest wasn't yet complete.
- 1. But (Praise God!), you and I live on the side of history where our great High Priest has gone alone into the Holiest Place in the presence of God, on history's final Day of Atonement, and has offered his own blood as our mediator, as the sacrifice offered, and as the altar on which it was offered.
 - 2. Now the sacrifice-offering portion of his ministry is complete; perfected forever. Now on the basis of that sacrifice he lives forever, making intercession for you and I before the throne, and saves us to the uttermost.

- B. May we never forget who our priest is; may we never look upon his offering as fleeting and ineffective as the blood of bulls and goats; May our hearts be drawn to worship, courage and faith as we cry out to him who forever cries out for us.
- V. **1 Corinthians 11:23 ESV** For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, **24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **25** In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **26** For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.
- VI. **Benediction: Numbers 6:24 ESV** The Lord bless you and keep you; **25** the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; **26** the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. (In the Name of the Father, In the Name of the Son, In the Name of the Holy Spirit, Amen)