**Fixing Our Hearts on Jesus**

**Jesus Our Eternal Priest**

**Hebrews 7:4-28**

We’re continuing our series of **Fixing our Hearts on Jesus** with a view to see **Jesus**

**our Eternal High Priest**

One of the last things you were left with last week was verses **19-20** of the NT book of

the Hebrews which the author states for us in chapter 6 that...

**Hebrews 6:19-20** “This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and

steadfast and one which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner

for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

Now, the hope the author refers to is the hope we have in God’s salvation promises. But then he shifts gears, so to speak to highlight the simple fact that this hope is anchored in the Person of Christ who went before us to stand in heaven as the Guardian of our salvation.

And then he goes on to say this hope is not to be seen in the former priesthood, but in a new one. Then, he goes onto apologetically state his case by essentially saying this:

The OT priest with its priesthood is insufficient because the ministry dies when the priest passes away.

That affectively means that there’s no one to stand the gap, as it were, between God and Man to make reconciliation on behalf of the people.

Now, that’s a serious problem that needs remedying, wouldn’t you say?

Now for us Gentiles, we’re in a theatre at this point watching how this whole thing’s going to unfold.

If the priest dies, there’s no one to present sacrifices before God and none to mediate on behalf of the people – *The whole system affectively falls apart!*

So what’s next for them?

Aaand what happens to us Gentiles? Who’s going to make reconciliation for us? Especially if the OT priesthood was exclusively for the Jew?

Now that’s a double whammy! Now, if I gave you the answer to that dilemma now, then we might as well wrap it up and call it a day! Happy Mother’s Day! 😊

But I want us to see together how God remedies the problem of an imperfect priesthood along with the dilemma of the Gentiles who seemingly have no hope either because salvation was for the Jew!

And it’s going to take some time for this to unfold that, right? With that said, please turn to the NT book of Hebrews 7:1-28.

There are times when we typically read through the text then take it part verse-by-verse.

The problem with reading it now is that it’s 28 verses to read through and so little time to do it. So for the sake of time, I’m going to read those verses segment-by-segment, and I’ll do my best to exposite the text by explaining it as I go.

Having said, I want to begin by talking about the OT priesthood called the Levites.

So here’s what our Lord prescribed: He set aside one tribe who were responsible for temple services – *that was the Tribe of Levi.*

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So then, all priests were Levites, but not all Levites were priests.

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The others who did not function as a priests were responsible for other temple services.

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Now, when the priests dies, there was a rotation of priests who were prepared to fill in the gap perpetually.

Understand that Israel needed a mediator between God and Man at all times, perpetually. If not, they were doomed!

You see, the priestly ministry never ended. It was a perpetual cycle of mediation and sacrifices.

So what the writer of the Hebrews does is raise what is perhaps the most powerful argument against OT Levitical system itself, and he essentially says this.

* Your priesthood is imperfect.
* Your sacrifices are imperfect.
* Your entire system is imperfect.

It’s not that it wasn’t useful or that it didn’t serve it’s purpose – it did. But it is to say that

The OT system was waiting for something better.

Now, you have to bear in mind that the author was concerned that because of the intensity of the persecution they were under for their turning to Christ, they suffered much loss some of the Hebrew Christians were tempted to go back to what they were familiar with.

And that’s his whole argument – why would you go to back to a system who’s sole purpose was to point to something better? Something far greater?

In other words, if you’re tempted to go back to what your familiar with, the system itself was designed to tell you not to!

Why? Because the whole priesthood along with its sacrifices was a type pointing to its antitype.

You say, what’s that?

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A type refers to person or thing in the Old Testament that points to a New Testament person or thing.

To put it simply, a type is a shadow/symbol of something or someone greater.

For instance, Adam is a type of Christ

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Noah and the Ark are a type of Christ

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Abraham was a type of Christ

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Melchizedek was a type of Christ

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There are lots of good material out there you to grow in this area.

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But the reason why I point this out to is to highlight the author’s first line of argumentation.

Take note of what he said in **Hebrews 7.**

**Hebrews 7:1-3** “For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who

met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to

whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all the spoils, was first of all, by the

translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is

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, he remains a priest

perpetually.”

Melchizedek is only referred to twice in the OT, but ten times in the New Testament book of Hebrews and nowhere else. This person an intriguing figure to say the least.

Melchizedek steps onto the canvas of history in Genesis 14 and is gone just as fast as he arrived – but not without leaving the kind of rippling effects such that the Hebrew reads it to his Hebrew congregation to continue to move forward with as Jesus as their High Priest and not to settle for anything less.

Even his name is interesting – his name literally means *“king of righteousness.”* We also read that he was a “King of Salem”, which is an archaic name/old name for Jerusalem.

That’s where he resided.

Now, God’s personal name is *Yahweh.* That’s His covenant name. The Jews would have understood that. They were afraid to use his personal name, so they substituted it for *Adonai,* which simply means *“my Lord”* or *“my God.”*

In fact, that’s precisely what Thomas ascribed to Christ! Any Jew would have understood the weightiness of Thomas words to Christ – *but not us Gentiles!*

They wouldn’t have the foggiest idea. Perhaps a good many of you Gentiles in this room still are scratching your heads because we are not apropos to anything Jewish!

Until you read this – that Melchizedek was a *“priest of the Most-High God.”*

Now, that is a name they would have recognized because it’s a *universal* name for God Himself.

The Gentiles in those days believed that there was a God above all lesser gods. In other words, God is not only a God of the Jews, but also of the Gentiles.

Now, at this point, that moves us from the theatre watching God’s redemptive story for the Jews and now into God’s redemptive play for the Gentiles!

You see, Melchizedek was just one of those rare person’s (along with Abraham) who held to the same faith as Abraham.

At some point, he must’ve had the faith of Abraham passed down through Noah.

Now, the main account of what we just read in verses 1-2 is a summary of Genesis 14, which is in your bulletin, and you are free to read the details.

But for the sake of time, I want to stick to the summary provided for us by the Hebrew and to highlight…

**Genesis 14:17-24** “Then after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings

who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Shaveh

(that is, the King’s Valley). And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine;

now he was a priest of God Most High. He blessed him and said, “Blessed be Abram of

God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High, Who

has delivered your enemies into your hand.” He gave him a tenth of all. The king of

Sodom said to Abram, “Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself.” Abram

said to the king of Sodom, “I have sworn to the Lord God Most High, possessor of

heaven and earth, that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is

yours, for fear you would say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’ I will take nothing except what

the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me, Aner, Eshcol,

and Mamre; let them take their share.”

**5 reasons Jesus' priesthood is superior to the Levitical priesthood**

Because that’s the point to the spear *in so far as* why no one should ever come to the conclusion that the OT system is somehow better then to what it itself was pointing to – *that is Christ!*

No one should ever come to the conclusion that that the OT type is better than the antitype. That the shadow of Christ is better than the Light of Christ.

So then, the Hebrew author argues that the reason why you are not to go back to something lesser is because…

**I. The Order of Melchizedek Is Greater**

In the sense that…

**A. Melchizedek received tithes from Abraham**

**Hebrews 7:4** *“Now observe how great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the choicest spoils.*”

Now this may bare little significance to us, but if you were an informed religious Jew, it bares a significant amount of weight in their mind, especially given the fact that…

**B. Melchizedek received tithes from Levi through Abraham**

Ok, now that’s passing strange. Perhaps you didn’t catch it, but Levi came after Abraham, not before – what’s going on here?

It ought to make sense in a moment!

But remember to keep in mind that, talking about Melchizedek is intended to be for the spiritually mature in the faith.

This isn’t milk we’re drinking at this point, but meat to be chewed on and swallowed according to the Hebrew author.

Now, in order for this to make sense, we need to turn to…

**Numbers 18:20-21**“*Then the Lord said to Aaron, “You shall have no inheritance in their land nor own any portion among them; I am your portion and your inheritance among the sons of Israel. To the sons of Levi, behold, I have given all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they perform, the service of the tent of meeting.*”

**Hebrews 7:5** *“And those indeed of the sons of Levi who receive the priest’s office have commandment in the Law to collect a tenth from the people, that is, from their brethren, although these are descended from Abraham.*

Now, the writer is alluding to Number 18. The Levites received a ten percent tithe from the people of Israel.

But in this case, it’s Abraham who is freely paying tithes to Melchizedek. The point is that the one who received tithes is greater than the one who gives tithes.

Not only did Abraham offer tithes to this man, we read that he gave to Melchizedek “a tenth of the choicest of the spoils.”

This wasn’t normal by any stretch of the imagination. Think with me here for a moment:

Abraham was demonstrating how special this man was.

Melchizedek wasn’t just a priest of the Most High God, he was a gentile King of the Most High!

And if you were a king, it also meant that a king has a kingdom – has land – has subjects – and you paid tithes your king.

Aaand, it just so happened that he acknowledged Abraham’s God as his own!

Levites only had one office – the office of priest!

Yet Melchizedek clearly had two-offices! He was greater.

Now, if you remember the story of Genesis 14, after Abraham’s slaughter of the kings to rescue his cousin Lot, two kings met up with Abraham not too far from Jerusalem, one of which was (1) Melchizedek, and (2) Bera king of Sodom (Gen. 14:2)

And the only king Abraham paid tribute to was…*Melchizedek!* And in that culture, the person you paid tithes to was greater!

Not only did Abraham honor Melchizedek in this way, but so did…the levites – how? They weren’t even conceived yet –

**Hebrews 7:9-10** *“And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.”*

In other words, even though the OT priesthood was not in existence yet, Abraham was the father of the Hebrew Faith.

And Levi was connected to Abraham by virtue of their family line/lineage! It would be like saying to you, we sinned “in the loins of Adam” because we are all connected to him.

Now, don’t let this concept confuse you, because a good number of you have seen this concept before in Scripture. For others, this may be new to you – allow me to introduce it to you.

For instance, Romans 5:12 – “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—”

In other words, when Adam sinned, we sinned. When Adam fell, we fell with him.

In 1 Corinthians 15:22 we the same thing – “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.”

That is to say, when Adam died, we died. But, if you are in Christ, you are made alive because you are now connected to him spiritually!

That’s the understanding of verse 9 – “And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes.”

Abraham recognized Melchizedek as greater, *so did his lineage!*

So then, the “order of Melchizedek” is greater than Abraham’s order and was recognized as such by Abraham.

But in addition to Melchizedek’s office being greater, it was…

**C. Melchizedek blessed Abraham**

**Hebrews 7:6-8** *“But the one whose genealogy is not traced from them collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises. But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater. In this case mortal men receive tithes, but in that case one receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives on.*

Not only did Abraham pay a tithe to someone greater, but was blessed by someone greater. It was a blessing and expression of God’s approval of Abraham.

But what does it mean that “in the case of mortal men receive tithes, but in that case of one receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives on.”

It means this –

**D. Melchizedek is a priest perpetually**

**Hebrews 7:3** *“Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually.”*

Jews paid tithes to priests who died. The Jews keep meticulous records of their people, from life to death.

But in the case of Melchizedek, there’s neither a record of his birth or death.

Yet, we see Abraham paying a tithe to a priest who, in type, “lives on.”

Here’s the point: which kind of priesthood do you want to be under?

Do you want to go back to a priesthood that perpetually dies or do you look forward to *one that perpetually lives forever?*

In other words, if you want to live, you will look forward to someone who’s everlasting and eternal.

If you look back, you’re going to die.

Do you see where this is heading…? He’s telling them that….

**II. The Levitical Priesthood was Limited**

It was limited in scope deliberately by God’s design because he wants to push people to Christ and all the promises anchored to Him.

So he says that…

**A. The Levitical priesthood was incomplete**

**Hebrews 7:11** *“Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron?*

The reason why the old system had to be replaced is because it was imperfect. Not imperfect with respect to it being sinful or faulty, but with respect to it being complete.

If it the old system was complete/perfect, then it doesn’t need replacing – that’s what he’s saying.

*But a superior priesthood has come. And it neither has a beginning nor end of days.* His mediation between God and man is everlasting – “according to the order of Melchizedek”!

Again, the Old system was a type – it always pointed forward to it’s counterpart/*antitype*.

It was *predicting someone greater was coming to complete the full picture – to fulfill what the OT was always pointing to.*

And once it full portrait came in Christ.

**Hebrews 7:18-19a** *“For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness (for the Law made nothing perfect).*

Therefore…

**B. The Levitical priesthood was temporary**

**Hebrews 7:12-14** *“For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also. For the one concerning whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests.”*

Both the law and the priesthood were holding hands – they were kept together. They were seen as one.

You couldn’t have one without the other in such a way that “…for under it (i.e., the priesthood) received the law.

But when Christ came, He not only was the fulfillment of all of the types/shadows pointed to, but his priesthood was greater by design.

And when there’s a change in the priesthood, there necessitates a change in the law. To put it simply: Out with the old and in with the New.

No more old covenant! A better priest has arrived! Christ has inaugurated a better NT covenant because…

**Galatians 3:24** *“Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.”*

**C. The Levitical priests were weak and sinful**

**Hebrews 5:1-3***“For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; he can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset with weakness; and because of it he is obligated to offer sacrifices for sins, as for the people, so also for himself.*

And…

**D. The Levitical priesthood was constrained by death**

**Hebrews 7:23** *“The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing…”*

Sin brought about weakness and death – we understand that. So then, the OT priests were constrained by weakness and death from perpetuating something that was never intended to last forever, but…

**III. Jesus’ Priesthood Allows Our King to be Our Priest**

One of the reasons why Melchizedek was greater than Abraham because he held two offices.

But Jesus holds three offices: Prophet, Priest, and King! Christ is greater than Melchizedek!

**A. Jesus was from the tribe of Judah, not Levi**

**Hebrews 7:13-14** *“For the one concerning whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests.*”

What’s so fascinating about this is by virtue of the fact that kings cannot be priest according to the old order.

Yet Jesus’ human lineage is from Judah – which is a tribe of kings. Is this somehow a contradiction?

No, because Jesus carries both offices. In fact, we know this because it was predicted that when the Messiah comes…

**Genesis 49:10** *“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.”*

**Zechariah 6:13-14** “Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the Lord, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, ***He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices.*** **Now the crown will become a reminder in the temple of the Lord…” please put in bold and underline**

**Hebrews 7:15-19** *“And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life. For it is attested of Him, “You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.” For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.*”

**B. The order of Melchizedek the coming priest was one with an indestructible life, not a Levitical line**

At this point, a word of caution seems necessary.

We don’t want to read into the lack of genealogy, so as to misuse the point being said about Melchizedek.

He did in fact die. He did in fact have parents. He did in fact have a lineage – The OT writer simply doesn’t record it because it’s irrelevant to his order of priesthood!

So then, even though Jesus didn’t come through the line of priests, it was *irrelevant because Christ is of a different order.*

A greater order!

**IV. Jesus’ Priesthood Is Permanent**

**A. It is based on an oath not lineage**

**Hebrews 7:20-22** *“And inasmuch as it was not without an oath (for they indeed became priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One who said to Him, “The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, ‘You are a priest forever’”); so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.”*

**B. He is the guarantee of a better covenant as He is not constrained by death**

**Hebrews 7:23-24** *“The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently.*”

**V. Jesus’ Priesthood Is Eternally Effective**

**A. He saves and intercedes forever**

**Hebrews 7:25** *“Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.*”

**Romans 8:33-34** *“Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.”*

**B. He is the perfect priest and sacrifice who offered up Himself once forever**

**Hebrews 7:26-28** *“For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever.”*

Jesus intercedes for his people forever.

Let’s pray