

INTRODUCTION

I remind us of our outline regarding the “heart” of Hebrews:

Chapter 7	A Better Priesthood
Chapter 8	A Better Covenant
Chapter 9	A Better Sanctuary
Chapter 10	A Better Sacrifice

So far in Hebrews 7 we have seen the **Historical Argument** around the person of Melchizedek that shows how he is a type of the Priest-King Messiah, Jesus:

Righteousness = “always right” or perfect; from the meaning of his name

Peace = mediator of a relationship between God and man; from the city from which he came

Royalty – from being the king of Salem

Outside humanity – for he was without father or mother mentioned

Eternal – for he has not birth or death mentioned

Today we will see the **Doctrinal Argument** from observing how Melchizedek is superior to Levi and Aaron as a priest of an entirely different order.

And we will see the author’s argument for a needed change in the priesthood on 3 counts:

1. Imperfect made perfect (v. 11-14)
2. Temporary made eternal (v. 15-19)
3. Unsecured made secure (v. 20-22)

Hebrews 7:11-22 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? 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. 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. 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.

CHANGE IS DIFFICULT, BUT NECESSARY

Change is difficult for most people. Oh, we say that we are open to change and new ways and ideas, but most of the time we are quite content to stay as we are – in our beliefs, our preferences and our way of life. It’s the time-worn principle: “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks.”

The Jewish Hebrews were steeped in a tradition of doing things that made it very difficult for them to consider change – especially when it came to changing their precious Law of Moses, Aaronic priesthood and how they accessed God. But a new law, priesthood and way of access had come in the person of Jesus, their Messiah. And the author of Hebrews is here attempting to explain and

persuade the greatness of this “better priesthood.”

For us as Gentiles, change is also difficult, even and especially in the spiritual arena. This is largely due to the demonic efforts of the enemy to dissuade us. But it is also because of our propensity, in our spiritual blindness, to think that we are “OK” when we really are not!

It is easy to think:

1. I’m OK with doing the best I can since God is loving and forgiving
2. God doesn’t call me to perfection, because Jesus took care of my sin on the cross
3. I hope I go to heaven, and I probably will

These too are the issues that the author of Hebrews addresses in 7:11-22. And he urges all his readers, including us, to change our satisfied pattern of thinking and consider that the example of Melchizedek is leading us to a grander view of our salvation through the superior priesthood of Jesus.

V. 11-14 - A CHANGED STANDARD

The law and the Levitical priesthood could not make people perfect – even “better.” The Law said: Follow God’s law and He will bless you. Or, in our understanding: Do the best you can and God will be on your side. The Levitical priesthood said: Bring your sacrifices for sin and they will be covered over (atoned). Neither the Law nor the priesthood could make people better or give them greater access to God. There was always a Holy Place that only the priests could enter and a Holy of Holies that only the High Priest could enter once a year. Access to God was far from intimate.

When King David wrote in Psalm 110 that the Messiah would be after the order of Melchizedek, he was saying that not only the priesthood was to be different, but the Law that enacted the priesthood would be different. That is the argument of the Hebrews author.

The new and correct divine standard was to be PERFECTION – and that was impossible with the old Law and Priesthood. No longer were we to strive to be as good as we could be. Now we needed to take on the perfection of God Himself through the priestly person of His son, Jesus.

“Levi” means “attached.” And the people were “attached” to the Law and the priestly line of Levi. Their attachment to God was through others who approached God for them.

“Judah”, the line of the Messiah Jesus, means “praise” or “joy.” Christ offers a new way of freedom from striving and joyful praise in full access to the Father beyond the veil of the old temple. Perfection is the new standard – attained through the perfect priesthood of Jesus, after the order of Melchizedek

v. 15-19 - A CHANGED QUALIFICATION

Under the old priesthood there was no qualification of character. You were a priest merely based on your genealogy from Levi. All of the priests’ preparations were based on the physical – what he wore, how he cleanses himself, where he went. No preparation was of the heart and soul. But with the qualification of Melchizedek and Jesus was the “power of an indestructible life” (7:16).

And likewise, our qualification for godliness is not based on our church attendance, baptism, communions, confessions, ministries and good deeds – as beneficial as all of these are to our growth as a follower of Christ. Our qualification for godliness is based on a changed qualification – that is, our relationship to Jesus Christ our High Priest.

v. 20-22 - A CHANGED SECURITY

God made a promise (or “covenant” or “testament”) through Abraham and his descendants.

This promise was again given on Mt. Sinai through Moses, resulting in the 10 Commandments and a multitude of other rules of conduct and ceremony that fill the book of Leviticus. – over 600 laws in all.
BUT – this promise was **CONDITIONAL**. It was based on the obedience performance of the nation and each individual in it.

The essence of the Old Testament Law is given in summary in Exodus 19:5.

Exodus 19:5 Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine.

Notice the “if” and “then” of this promise. It was a promise, to be sure – but what security was there in that promise. The only security was in the ability to “obey” and “keep” which is found to be impossible by a fallen creature.

Let’s look at David’s comment on Melchizedek in Psalm 110 once again, especially noting what comes before the mention of Melchizedek:

Psalm 110:4 The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Notice the oath, and notice the lack of condition. “He will not change His mind” = the priesthood, and thus the Law has been changed.

In Hebrews 7:18 notice the wording in both the New American Standard Bible and the New International Version says “setting aside” referring to the Law. The Greek wording is much stronger. (GK: *athetesis* = cancellation). This says that the Law has been completely dismissed, cancelled and “thrown away” because of its uselessness in making a man “perfect” in God’s eyes.

Our new security is based on God’s unchangeable promise that Jesus is our High Priest forever and that He is the guarantee of a better covenant – or better promise or Law. This is the law of grace, love, forgiveness and mercy made available to us through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus.

Through Him, we are seen as perfect in God’s eyes. And through Him we have intimate and free access to Him.

BETTER INDEED!

Let me make one final observation and comment.

In 7:19 we read that the setting aside of the old Law and bringing in of the new brings us a “new hope.”

My observation is that this is the only time in the Bible that this phrase “new hope” is found!

My comment is: What an amazing and spectacular gift this is. How we all desperately need “new hope.”

And where is it found? - in our Lord and Priest-King, Jesus the Christ. He alone is the giver of “new hope.”

Where do you need “new hope” in your life today? Find it in God. Run to Him. Take shelter in Him. Renew your hope by spending intimate time with Him as you access the very presence of God by the perfect priesthood of Jesus.