

A Priest Everlasting
Hebrews 7:20-28

Romans 8:18-30
Ephesians 1:15-20
Responsive Psalm 24

Today we are going to be finishing out the 7th chapter of the book of Hebrews, we will be focusing on verses 20 through the end of the chapter this morning, but as per usual I want to go back and read last weeks passage as well to remind is where we are at, so let us start this morning at verse 11. So as we have been working through chapter 7 we can see the author has been focusing a lot on this Melchizedek character. We can basically divide this chapter up into 3 sections dealing with Melchizedek, the first part mentions him as The King of Salem, establishing his kingship showing that even the patriarch Abraham paid tithes and homage to him, and mentions that he is without mother or father or genealogy which is the 3rd part that we will be diving deeper into today. The 2nd established Melchizedek as priest, but not just any priest, a priest of the Most High God, of the same God of Abraham. The subsequent verses that we focused on last week go into this argument that his priesthood existed before Moses, before the old covenant law and temple, before the establishment of the Levitical priesthood. Making this a priesthood that is outside of the Levitical priesthood, which as we showed last week has implications into the law as well, since the priesthood of Christ is from this order, or from the likeness of Melchizedek's having no beginning or end, being eternal, and separate from the Levitical priesthood. Which was the thrust of last week's sermon, as it says in verse 12, if there is change in the priesthood there is necessity also a change of the law.

Pointing us now to this new Priest, and a new Law which was established in Christ Jesus, superseding and making the old obsolete. And even though we went all over it last week I can't just leave that hanging there, so since the old law and covenants are now obsolete and have been replaced by the new established in Christ Jesus, therefore we who are Christs are not bound to the law of death, but are instead bound in the law of Christ. That's right, the 10 commandments, and all the other laws of the old Covenant have no authority over you, for Christ has come, he has fulfilled the law and established a new, He took the punishment of God's righteous requirements in our stead, and the law of Christ is not written on tablets of stone, but on the flesh, on our hearts. It operates in each and every one of us through the holy spirit. For we no longer seek to follow a list of rules and regulations in an attempt to gain favor before God, but instead we operate out of a love toward God through a changed heart. It is this love, and this changed heart that governs our lives, it is how we are Christians operate, through the love of God shining through us, and through the conviction of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

So that brings us to the 3rd aspect of this comparison the author here has been doing between Melchizedek and Christ, Which is his eternal nature, and the legitimacy of his priesthood. Starting out in verse 20, it says "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" The levitical priests did not take oaths for their priesthood, for they belonged to the tribe of Levites who had been established since Moses as the house or lineage of priests. An oath was unnecessary, for they were essentially born into the role. But Christ is not from the Tribe of Levi, he was born from the Tribe of Judah, through the lineage of King David. So this would disqualify him as a priest in the old covenant law, yet the bible says that he is our high priest.

So his priesthood comes from somewhere different, and as we see here, unlike the levitical priests, his is a priesthood by oath, by promise. It is God himself who promised, who had sworn and will not relent that this High Priest shall be a priest forever who's Kingdom, and Priesthood shall never end. This idea of Christ's priesthood being established by God through an Oath takes us back to earlier in Hebrews in the account of God's Oath and promise to Abraham, chapter 6:13, "For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, he swore by himself. Saying Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute, thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of his council confirmed it by an oath.

God's oath established for all time the unchangeable character of his purpose. We see this in the fact that the priesthood of Christ was planned and set forth hundreds of years before the establishment of the Levitical priesthood, which is what we see in Psalm 110. So essentially when Christ comes on to the scene, when he is born these two priestly orders converge. You have the order of Melchizedek, as the first, and which has been established as an unending priesthood, and you have the Levitical priesthood established when God gave the old covenant law to Moses. The Messiah comes, and these two priesthoods center on him, the one which was a foreshadowing of his own priesthood, and the other which was given as Paul says, as a tutor, as one given to teach about our need for a Messiah, and now that the Messiah has come, there is no longer a need for this tutor. It's holy purpose has been fulfilled, it is time for it to fade, for now Christ has come, and the greater supersedes the lesser, in Christ the levitical priesthood has ended and along with it the law they were established to uphold, and in Christ the eternal priesthood is established, along with it the eternal law which operates in each and every one of us.

God's covenant with Abraham, and his declaration of the priestly order of Melchizedek are both confirmed by God, through an oath, and it is through both of these leaders of the faith which fulfill all of the glorious and gracious promises and prophecies which are fulfilled in Christ. The promise to Abraham that his descendants will outnumber the stars, and that by his seed all nations shall be blessed, and his promise of an eternal priest who will always offer intercession for Abraham's descendants, the true Israel, the people of the faith of Abraham. In Christ, both of these oaths are fulfilled. Which brings us to verse 22, which says, that Jesus has become a surety to us of a much better covenant. Under Moses, the old and inferior covenant, and the old and inferior priesthood belong together, but now in Christ is a new and better covenant, and a new and better priesthood. Christ's covenant and priesthood is established by an Oath from God, the sovereign King of all, the creator, and the author and finisher of our faith and it is on the basis of the perfection of Christ's offering of himself as the redeemer of all those who believe. Christ is our surety, our guarantee, of this better covenant of which he is the substance of, his covenant will not fail, nor will it be replaced, but is eternally established through the incarnate Son of the Most High God.

The author here continues on in verse 23, showing even more evidence as to why this new priesthood established in Christ is superior to the old, when he says, "Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. But He, because he continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood." By the time Jesus arrives, the levitical priesthood and practice of the law is something different than what we see when it was first established. This is the nature of things which are not eternal and are carried on through the generations of mankind, they change, they shift and even eventually the focus can be lost and they take on a life of their very own.

Much like the ol' telephone game kids play, sitting in a circle one kid would whisper a word or phrase to the kid next to them and he would in turn whisper it to the next and it would go all away around the circle until it reached the last kid who would then say it out loud. 9 times out of 10 it was not even close to the original phrase. IT is the same thing with anything passed down from generation to generation, things are lost, things are embellished, or added to. Now it is not as if they added to the law itself, but it was the change in interpretation of those laws from generation to generation to where we see Israel is at when Christ comes the religious leaders are something different then what we see with the wilderness temple and the early established priesthood. So its not hard to see the significance, and importance of this new eternal high priest, for even by the time of Christ's arrival on earth it would seem that the practice of the mosaic law had taken on a life of its own, we can see that through Christ's own criticism of the religious leaders of his time. Where the old priests would die, and the priesthood would pass from generation to generation, Christ himself being eternal, has no need for any priestly succession like the priests of old. And for this reason, his priesthood is unchanging, it is the same today as it was the day it was established.

Also, because Christ is eternal, and his priesthood is eternal there is no death, or anything that prevents Christ from performing his office of high priest, that is to be our representative before God, Christs, much like the priest of old, bridges the gap between God and man, but where they could never be perfect, Christ has now come to fulfill that role perfectly. There is no greater hope, then knowing that the one who stands as our mediator has conquered death, lives eternal, and is always available for us, always making intercession for us. This makes Christ the sole, and only mediator between God and man ruling out any other ways, or methods of salvation and justification before God. Salvation is only through Christ, by his blood. This stands against the modern idea that all religions end in the same place, that no matter what you believe you will be in heaven when you die. But God's word says that it is only through his Son, it is only through Christ, the high priest, and the spotless lamb.

Christ is exactly the high priest we need, as it says in verse 26 "For such a high priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher then the heavens. He came, and fulfilled all that is required to reconcile sinful fallen mankind back to God. Which in this verse, and the following verses we see why that is exactly that he is exactly the high priest that we need. First off, as listed in this verse 26, he is described as the priest that is holy, blameless and undefiled, or unstained from the sin's of mankind. Unlike the priests of old, or even us believers today Christ's holiness is his own. We have no holiness save from that which he has provided and given to us. Also the unstained character of Christ further attests to his mediation between man and God. He is not merely something superficial, or symbolic and ceremonial like the sacrifices of old, but rather is the fulfillment, the fullness of the sacrifice needed to atone for our sin and rebellion. His unstained nature makes him alone holy and just, and able to be the perfect high priest that we as fallen mankind need.

And because of his sinless, holy nature we see in verse 27, it says unlike the priest of old "he does not need daily as the high priests, to offer up sacrifices first for his own sis and then for the people, for this he did once for all when he offered himself up. Christ no only is our high priest, he is our atoning sacrifice, the perfect, just and holy sacrifice that is exactly what mankind needs. This shows in itself the fallen nature of mankind, and the holiness of God. For even the priests who were charged to remaining holy and pure needed to offer sacrifices for themselves daily. Where as Christ, the better high priest, and sacrifice being holy and pure himself has no need of such a sacrifice. And has rather fulfilled perfectly that which these other's were pointing to.

Therefore as the verse said, once and for all, there is no longer a need for the practice of such sacrifices for Christ has come and fulfilled them, once and for all.

Verse 28, 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. Again we see this close relationship between the law and the levitical priesthood, where they are tied together, you can't have one without the other. And here it points out again, the weakness of these priests in this old system, that they were mortal, subject to the laws of nature and death, and that they themselves were also sinful and needing sacrifices to cover their own sins. Because of their weakness, these high priests were incapable of making an atonement infinite in its worth, and eternal in its effect but instead needed to repeat daily as it were. But Christ on the other hand, overcame such a weakness, being himself just and holy, being tempted as we are tempted yet in all ways remaining pure and righteous he overcame this weakness, endured and suffered until the end, and proving that even in death he is still the Sovereign Lord who has the power to lay down his life, and take it back up again. Not only defeating sin, but death itself. So as the Author here says in chapter 5:7 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 great 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.

Again in this verse we see the author alluding that if the law and the levitical priest hood was sufficient there would have been reason for Christ to be the new high priest and establishing a new law for the Author here says, the word of the oath, which came after the law. We had already talked about God's oath, and his promise and how Christ is a priest according to the order of Melchizedek, The important part here, is that this oath, which is written in psalm 110, still is active after the law had already been given. If the law had been perfect, then there would be no reason that this oath would still be necessary. So again, this points to just another reason why we as Christians do not need to be looking back at the old covenant Laws for a rule and guide, for we have the one in whom God swore an oath to himself, being that there is none greater to swear by, that he will provide for us a priest, everlasting unlike the mortal dying levitical priests, to make intercession for us always. Notice Christ is tied to this oath, in which Melchizedek is given as an example, his priesthood is not tied to the levitical priests and the law, but to something else, he skips over the law and the covenants and goes back to the priest who has no beginning or end. Christ has fulfilled the Oath, Christ has fulfilled the law, all things are in him and through him and without him there is nothing.

What wonderful hope we have in such a high priest who stands eternally as our mediator, who is there for us, who offered himself as an atoning sacrifice for us who believe.