

The Declaration of a New & Better Priesthood

Hebrews 7:11-19

Reading: Jeremiah 29:10-14

Bethany Baptist Church

October 14, 2018

...pray...

It's what *Moses* wanted when he *begged* to see God's glory!

It's what *David* desired when he confessed *my soul thirsts for You & my flesh yearns for you*.

It's why *little Nicodemus* climbed up that *big tree*.

It's what got *Mary* in trouble w/ *Martha*, seated at Jesus' feet instead of in the *kitchen*.

It's why the *Apostle Paul* cried: *that I may know Him...!*

It's what we were originally *designed* for – to *know* God, to *draw near* Him, to be certain He's *drawn near to us!*

God has sent *His Son* to make that *possible*.

Join me this morning in Hebrews 7:11-19. As we unpack this morning's text we need to keep in mind that we have just entered a long section of the letter (ch.7-10) that reveals the heart of *Hebrews*: Jesus is our great *high priest* and the *surety* of the New Covenant. Read

Jesus is the *new & better high priest* who replaces the *entire Old Covenant priesthood!*

To *see* that point, we need to understand *a critical word* in our text: **“*perfection*”** (→ vv.11 & 19).

1. The underlying **Gr.** word (τελειωσις) speaks generally of *completeness* and in your **NT** often refers to *spiritual maturity/sanctification*, but **here** and in other places in *Hebrews*, our author uses this *general* term in a very *specific* way:
2. *...perfection* comes when you are brought into a right relationship with God. Or, as you see it in **v.19** – *when you are able to **draw near** to God* and know (Jas 4) that *God has **drawn near** to you*.

The ***big idea*** is that only the *sin-bearing, sacrifice offering, eternally intercessing priesthood* of Jesus can provide you a *perfect (drawing near)* relationship to God!

So this morning we *continue* down that *path* by examining:

Two reasons why Jesus is the *only priest* you'll ever need:

1. He has assumed a *better priesthood* (vv. 11-14).
2. He provides a *perfect hope* (vv. 15-17).

We begin (11-14) by considering that our Lord has assumed a *new & better* priesthood.

1. The ministry of a *priest* is to represent *God* before man, and man to God. Remember that we've already determined that there are **two** priesthoods under consideration in Hebrews:
 - a. ... the *Levitical* priesthood established under the *Law of Moses*, w/ Moses' brother Aaron as its *first high priest*. All religious functions in Israel were confined to the *tribe of Levi*, and (more spec. all priests were descended from *Aaron*).
 - b. ... *second*, the priesthood of *Melchizedek*, **King** of Salem & **priest** of God Most High (Gen 14). This mysterious **OT** priest was to become a *symbol (type)* of the coming priesthood of *Messiah Jesus*, who is the **surety** of the *New Covenant* (Psa 110:4).
 - c. We are about to be reminded that these **two** *priesthoods* are **not** at all *related* and they are fundamentally *different*: i.) the *Levitical* priests were qualified by *externals*; ii.) the priesthood symbolized in Melchizedek is characterized by *much more* than what you can see on the *outside*!

2. But **why** does God promise & provide a *new priesthood* in Jesus, and **why** is it *better*, and **what else** does the Lord's priesthood imply?

Read v.11

 - a. To begin with, it's because the old priesthood was *never designed* to do what ultimately *needed to be done*...
 - b. And there's our *critical word* – "*perfection*"! The *Levitical priesthood* **didn't** provide the **lasting atonement** and the **eternal intercession** needed to allow you & me to confidently *draw near to God* (remember v.19b?). I.e. it couldn't *save* us!
 - c. And the *inadequacy* of the *priesthood* implies the *inadequacy* of the *Law*. The Law prescribed the *priesthood*, their *sacrifices*, and the *feasts*. All of which *pictured* atonement, but never *provided* an *atonement* that *lasted*. All offered by sinful, human *priests* who needed their *own* sacrifices before they offer one for *anyone* else.

- d. The **OT** Law's *sacrifices* were only designed to **picture** God's *ultimate* answer for our sin – the *once & for all sacrifice* by His Son.
 - e. So the *Levitical priesthood* was implemented to be eventually *decommissioned*. God planned that, *all along*.
 - f. All of this is *clear* when you understand that *Melchizedek* pointed to a *new priest coming*, and there is only a need for **one** *priesthood* at a time. God brought *Melchizedek* on the scene long before *Aaron* (7:1-10 → Gen 14), and God then tied *Melchizedek* to *Messiah* (7:17 → Psa 110) long before *Bethlehem*!
3. Do you see that little word “*for*” at the beginning of **vv.12 & 13 & 14**? The author of Hebrews provides **three** *explanations* of this fundamental *change of priesthoods* (read **v.12-14**):
- a. *First, v.12* – when one *priesthood* is *exchanged* for another, the law that *establishes* the **first** *priesthood* goes with it.
 - i. Specifically, of course, the *regulations* of the Law regarding priests & the sacrifices & the altar, but it's hard to *unravel* those details from the *greater tapestry* of the *Mosaic Law*.
 - ii. Jesus claimed that He came to *fulfill the Law* (Mt 5). How did Jesus *fulfill* the Law? *By keeping every requirement* as He led a *perfect, sinless* life. And by His life to demonstrate His worthiness & worth as our *unblemished, once & for all, sacrifice*.
 - iii. And when you *trust* in Christ, His righteousness, *fulfilling* the Law, is written into your *moral ledger*! Only Jesus can *satisfy* God's Law for you!

- iv. Has the Law been *removed* in every sense? **No** – it still communicates God's *basic character* (i.e. *holiness*) in the *Decalogue (10 Commandments)* and thus His fundamental *moral requirements* for men & women.
1. Which means that the *Holy Spirit* uses the Law to convince us of our *need for Christ*: **Gal 3:24** (Paul) – *Therefore the Law has become our **tutor** to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.*
 2. Once upon a time, the *Law* established & regulated the old *priesthood*, now the Spirit can use it to *lead sinners* to the *Great High Priest* it the Law merely *foreshadowed*.

- b. *Second, v.13* – that fancy phrase, “*the one concerning whom these things are spoken*” is a reference to Jesus. The author is simply putting a *sharper point* on his argument & then *drilling it home*. This **new priest**, Jesus, has **no** historic relationship to the **old** priesthood from *Aaron*.

- c. *Third expansion, v.14* –in order to *convince* us of **v.13** (“**for**”) and *specifically* to apply it to Jesus, he reminds us that our Lord was from the *tribe of Judah* (the *Lion of Judah*), which the Mosaic Law **never** connects to the **OT** priesthood.
 - i. You can read *Leviticus* front to back, & back to front, but you won’t *find it*!

- d. **All** of which underscores the core message of Hebrews that the *priesthood & covenant* of Jesus is **new** & it’s *better*!

And Jesus' priesthood provides a *perfect* hope. Read vv.15-17

1. We just read (14) that *it is evident that our Lord* is from *the tribe Judah*, **not Levi**. Now we read (15) that that truth it is *even clearer still* because Jesus is foreshadowed by an **OT** priest that **not** only is **not** from *Levi*, he **wasn't** even descended from *Father Abraham*!
 - a. Maybe that *Melchizedek* guy was a *priest & king & peace & righteousness & w/o genealogy*, maybe *Abraham* did give him *gifts*, & receive his *blessing*. But he just *didn't fit* the priestly requirements in the *Law*! He isn't even *Jewish*! 😊
 - b. To the **1st** century Jewish reader you couldn't *wander any further* off the *orthodox reservation* than that!

2. So what qualifies Jesus, in the *likeness* of *Melchizedek*, to be *appointed a priest*?
 - a. The *Levitical priest* satisfied a series of *rigidly regulated requirements*. They had nothing to do with *spirituality & character*, but only with *physical* characteristics: i.) *tribe of Levi & line of Aaron*; ii.) the son of *legitimate* marriage relationships, iii.) **not** possessing any one of **142** *physical defects or blemishes*.
 - i. Of course, this emphasis on *externals* does **not** mean there were no *good priests*, but being *godly* was just not specified in the *rules*, and many priests were **not good** (*Eli, Hophni, Phineas*).

- b. But in contrast, our Lord Jesus was *qualified based on the **power of an indestructible life***. In addition to all the divine qualities *symbolized* in Melchizedek, add this: the *life* of Jesus is *indestructible*. Is **that** powerful!?!
- i. *Indestructible*: it's a reference to Jesus' *crucifixion & resurrection*.
 - ii. They could *nail* Jesus to the *cross* but couldn't *keep* Him in the *grave*!
 - iii. Which means He is **alive** *right now*, **seated** *at the right hand of the Majesty on High*, and **that** fact (as we've begun to see & will soon see again in Hebrews) is *essential to understanding why His priesthood is new & it is better*.
3. Our author goes on to offer **two** explanations of why Jesus' *qualifications* are superior to *Aaron's*.
- a. *First* (17), he quotes again from the **OT**. I've pointed out that *Hebrews* draws on the **OT** in nearly every important section of the letter, and often from the *Psalms*.
 - i. This is **Psa 110:4b** (seen already in **5:6**), which is used to stress how important the *symbol of Melchizedek's priesthood* is in *establishing & understanding* the priestly office of our Lord.
 - ii. **Psalm 110:4**, with its declaration that Messiah's priesthood is *forever*, reinforces Jesus' *powerful, indestructible life* (16).
 1. Melchizedek simply **symbolized** an eternal priest (**no father or mother, no genealogy, no successor, no recorded beginning** of days or *end* of life).
 2. But Jesus **is eternal**, as *proven* by His *resurrection* from the *grave* on the **3rd** day.

- b. Then we read **one** more *implication* of Jesus' *new & better* priesthood, developed in **vv.18&19**. Our author *frames-up* his point like this (18): *For on the one hand...*, then completes it like this (19) *and on the other hand*.
- i. *For on the one hand...* As was mentioned in **v.12** a *new* priesthood in place of the *old* priesthood means a *new* law in place of the *old* law.
1. The Law had a *purpose*: it reinforced the *reality of sin* and pictured the need for a *payment for sin*.
 2. It created a desire for a *once and for all* sacrifice, because those **OT** sacrifices **never stopped** (**never enough**). So again, the **OT** Law wasn't *bad* but it was *limited*.
 3. Why does the author label it *weak & useless*? Because the Law **symbolized** what we *need most w/o providing* what we *need most...*
 4. ...it could *picture* but could never *provide* the means for a *perfect* relationship to God, which can only possible through *the once & for all atonement for all our sins*. ...
 5. ..and where does **that** come from...(for the Law makes **nothing perfect**)?

- ii. **v.19** – ...*but on the other hand*... Only the Gospel (our *better hope*) offers **that hope**, and only the *Savior & Priest of the Gospel* could provide the *perfection* you & I long for.
1. Now *remember*: “*perfection*” here means a *personal relationship* with God we *draw near to God* thru *faith in Jesus*.
 2. Do you *remember* that a priest’s job is to *represent* God before men & *bring* men & women to God...?
 3. The priesthood of Jesus **reveals** a *gracious & loving God* to men & women, as He **brings** *forgiven women & men* to God. And so we have *these promises*...
 - a. **Jer 29:12-14** (God promised) – *Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord.*
 - b. **James 4:10** – *draw near to God & God will...*
 - c. **John 14:6** – *come to the Father thru Me, alone...*
- iii. Jesus offers a *better hope* than you can find in the *Law* & in a frail human *priesthood*.
1. That *hope* is His *gospel*: the *promise* that by *faith* in Jesus’ *death & burial & resurrection & appearing*, you can be sure of *forgiveness & newness & perseverance & eternal life*...and you can be sure **now!**

Friend, you can *draw near to God* through *faith* in Jesus Christ – and that’s a *better hope*...a *perfect hope*!

...*pray*...

Hebrews was written to people who has been **attending church** but had just about decided it **wasn't** worth it...

...some were afraid of *cultural blowback* if they identified themselves as Christians...

...some couldn't seem get *off their spiritual fence* and commit to Christ.

Those type of people can *still* be found in church today...

God had provided the only priest you need. The only way to draw near

- a. The *resurrected Son of Man* is preached in your midst.
- b. **Jesus** died on the cross *bearing sins*, **not** His own.
- c. Every man & woman faces *death & judgment*
- d. Will you *turn* to Christ? Will you *trust* Him? “*Draw near to Me, and I will draw near to you!*”

?If you need someone to explain the *hope* of the *Good News*, to you, will you let me *speak* with you?

You can find me *any time*, but how about this morning...?

While we *sing* this final hymn, *come forward* & let me *share* with you.