



GRACE

Reformed Baptist Church

Soli ♦ Deo ♦ Gloria

THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

Sermon Notes

The Order of Melchizedek, Part 2

Hebrews 7:11-19

June 14, 2009

- ❖ If you have ever served in any leadership capacity, you know the frustration of individuals approaching you with problems, yet without any solution.
- ❖ As such, it is often said that one should never point out a problem if he does not first propose a solution.
- ❖ Yet God, in His infinite wisdom, has done both for us in the Scriptures. First, He has honestly and accurately diagnosed our problem as fallen man. Through the Law, He has revealed that we are sinful people, without any hope of a relationship with a holy and righteous God.
- ❖ However, in God's infinite grace, He chose to also propose a solution – the only solution – to our problem of sin. His solution was Jesus Christ. Through His righteous life and atoning death, Jesus Christ secured salvation for His people.
- ❖ And, so, this is the greatness of God – He has told us of our problem, and provided *the* perfect solution in Jesus Christ.
- ❖ This is also what the author of Hebrews is underscoring in this passage: The Law of God was *never* the solution to our problem of sin – only Jesus Christ is.
- ❖ Yet, the problem with the first century Jews is that they took the Law of God as the God-ordained means through which they would become righteous on this earth, and therefore, earn the right to enter into the presence of God.

- I. **The Old Covenant was Deficient and Temporary**
- II. **A New Covenant was Necessary**
- III. **The New Covenant is Sufficient**

I. The Old Covenant was Deficient and Temporary

- In **Verse 11**, the author of Hebrews writes, “Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek., rather than one named after the order of Aaron?”
 - The Greek word translated “perfection” (*teleiosis*) can also be translated “completion.”
 - Richard Philips notes that the author uses this word “here to refer to salvation, for perfection or completion is the condition in which people are made acceptable to God.”
 - Contextually, the author has in mind the concept of *purpose*. In other words, the Levitical priesthood was imperfect to accomplish that which was not its *purpose*, namely, salvation.
 - Consider a large ocean-liner/Cruise ship. Such a boat would be perfectly sufficient to sail the open seas from port to port. However, its purpose ends when it comes to a port where the sea meets dry land. If one needed to travel across the Caribbean Sea, such a ship would be perfect. However, to travel just one mile across land, the ship becomes woefully insufficient – even a terrible hindrance.
 - So it was with the Old Covenant. Perfection, with respect to salvation, was unattainable through the Mosaic Law, for the Law was transitional, temporary, and insufficient.
 - According to A.W. Pink, “To announce that the Mosaic economy was temporary, inadequate, defective, was unbelievable to a pious but unregenerate Israelite, and it was something which was far from easy to prove [even] to a regenerate Jew. They believed that the Levitical system of priesthood *was* “perfect.” It had been instituted by Jehovah Himself, so surely it must be sufficient and permanent!...[However] many things made by God – such as a chrysalis for the butterfly – serve a temporary purpose and then become useless when a more perfect stage of development is reached.”
- Then, in **Verse 12**, he writes, “For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well.”
 - The author is not referring here to the Ten Commandments. These never change and are certainly still binding on the believer even to this day. Rather, the author is referring to the Mosaic Law as a means of salvation.

A “change of law” in this respect was absolutely needed. Yet, one should never forget that the Mosaic Law as never intended to save anyone.

- John MacArthur correctly rights, “The word **law** has several meanings in Scripture. In its broadest sense, it refers to the whole Old Testament, the Old Covenant. It can also mean the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments. It can also signify the required rituals and ceremonies of the Old Covenant. Since they were commanded of Israel by God, they were part of His law for them. I believe that is clearly what is meant here. The Holy Spirit is saying that, if the old priesthood is defunct, so is all the law that pertains to it.”
- Then, our author writes, in **Verses 13-17**, “For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life. For it is witnessed of him,

‘You are a priest forever,
After the order of Melchizedek.’”

- Again, the author’s point is clear. He is essentially stating: **If it is not broken, do not fix it!** However, there was a “problem” with the Old Covenant. It was able to save NO ONE.
- From eternity past, the Law of God was never designed, nor intended to be God’s means for salvation. Rather, it was intended to lead us to Christ. Or, as the Apostle Paul states, to be our “tutor” or “schoolmaster” leading us to Christ.
 - Consider an analogy of a mirror. To look in a clean mirror is to see a pure reflection of oneself. However, consider if someone hits their head and cuts his face. When looking in a mirror, this individual will quickly discover the nature of the cut – its size and depth. Yet, the mirror can do nothing to heal the cut. Yet, it functioned just as it should – as an accurate reflection of the problem. Something, or someone else will be required to heal the cut.
 - And, so it is with the Law – for it simply serves as a reflection of a person’s unrighteousness and sinfulness. It does not provide for a permanent solution.
 - Richard Phillips comments, “[The Mosaic Law] offers no power, no change of heart, to motivate us along that change of course, and no impetus to move along the new azimuth.”

- Therefore, a new “law” was needed, as well as a new priesthood to administer that law.
- And, so God provided a priest who was completely unique – one after the order of Melchizedek. He would be a completely new high priest, whose right to serve was not based upon lineage, like those of the Aaronic priesthood.
 - The Levitical priests were appointed to their positions because the Law stated it was so. In other words, the Levites derived their right and authority to serve, not based upon anything inherent within them; but, rather, by the external Mosaic Law. Consequently, if one were to ask a Levite, “By what authority do you serve as a priest of Yahweh?” He would certainly reply, “Upon the authority of the Law of Moses.”
 - Similarly, in our own country today, the President of the United States derives his authority to serve based on nothing within himself, but rather the Constitution of the United States. For, it is in the Constitution that where it states that the President is to be elected based upon a majority of votes within the Electoral College. In fact, in 2000, when George W. Bush did not receive a majority of the popular vote in this country, many claimed he did not have a “mandate” of the people of this country. The point was clear: according to the Constitution, the President’s powers are derived from the people. Without the electoral support of the people, no man – regardless of how intelligent or wealthy – has the right or authority to serve as President.

However, Christ’s right and authority to rule and serve as high priest is not derived from human lineage or external law; but, rather, from the life and righteousness that is inherent to Himself. That is, Jesus’ authority as high priest was and is derived from His essence. For, only Jesus Christ has life in Himself (John 1:4; 5:26)

- The author of Hebrews “states the obvious” when he writes, in **Verse 14**, “For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.”
 - His point in doing this was certainly because he was anticipating the arguments from the pious Jews of the first century who would have likely asserted that the Messiah – if he were to serve a priestly function – would need to arise out of the tribe of Levi...certainly no Judah.
 - However, the author also employs another Old Testament text to support his argument: **Psalm 110:4**. Therefore, the truth of the Messiah’s unique priesthood was foretold by David well in advance of the birth of Jesus Christ.

- Andrew Murray writes, “When God speaks to His Son, ‘You are Priest forever,’ it not only means that the priesthood will never cease, but it points to what is the root and cause of this; it roots in the life and strength of God.”
- Consequently, **Jesus is from a wholly different order than Aaron.**
 - This provides us with a qualifiable – rather than a quantifiable – distinction between the priests of Aaron and Jesus Christ.
 - Jesus is not simply superior to the Aaronic priesthood because He will live a little longer, or because He is more intelligent; rather, He is better because He is fundamentally different. He cannot be compared to the Aaronic priesthood, as He is so far superior.

II. A New Covenant was Necessary

- The author concludes this section, in **Verses 18-19**, writing, “For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.”
 - **A New Covenant was necessary, as the Old Covenant was weak and useless with respect to “making men perfect.”**
 - Therefore, if we were to ever commune with God, then, we would need a new covenant.
 - How terrifying would it be to – by God’s grace – learn of one’s “helpless estate” only to learn that there is no provision to correct this problem.
 - Richard Phillips rightly states, “When Jesus died on the cross, he fulfilled the intent of the old priesthood, accomplishing the full atonement it anticipated, and therefore its order was set aside. Then, rising from the dead and ascending to the right hand of God the Father in heaven, he established a new and eternal priesthood that is able to accomplish all that the old priesthood could not. His heavenly ministry, in the power of eternal life, sends forth that life by the Holy Spirit, to change us and draw us near to God.”

 - It must never be forgotten, however, that although the Law of God is unable to save anyone – for it was never intended to – it is still righteous and perfect *for the purpose for which God ordained it* – to bring God’s people to repentance.

- Consider the words of the Apostle Paul, in **Romans 7:12**, “The law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.”
- Even the Psalmist, in **Psalms 119:97**, states, ‘Oh, how I love your law!’”

III. The New Covenant is Sufficient

- Even though the Old Covenant was insufficient for salvation, God has provided out sufficiency in the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- **He is essentially superior to the Old Covenant** and fully able to accomplish that with the Old Covenant could never do.
- Therefore, what is it that Jesus Christ can do that the Mosaic Law was never intended to do?
 - **Justification**
 - The Law reflects God’s standard of righteousness. However, it is a static reflection, having the ability in itself to enable no one to obey its demands.
 - The Law justified no one. However, the Law is righteous and good.
 - Therefore, Jesus Christ came and fulfilled the Law (to the “T”), becoming, Himself, righteousness for all who will believe.

2 Corinthians 5:21: “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

- **Peace**
 - Only Jesus Christ can break down the barriers separating God and man. Only He can lead us into a right relationship with Almighty God.
 - Read Romans 5:10; Isaiah 9:6 Colossians 1:20; Romans 5:1; Ephesians 6:15.
 - Donald Grey Barnhouse wrote, “Take the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, which says that the lion shall lie down with the lamb, and read it to the lions in the zoological garden. Tell the lion that God’s Word says that he is to lie down with the lamb. The lion will roar and say that he is tired of horse meat and would like to have some lamb. But he wants it to devour – not as a companion. In order to turn the lion from his natural appetite for flesh, it will

be necessary to change his nature. Only then will the eleventh chapter of Isaiah come into its fulfillment. And in order to make mankind (corrupt in all his thoughts and ways and deeds) live up to the requirements of the [law] [and, therefore, be at peace with Almighty God], the miracle of regeneration will be necessary which plants within him the new nature, the life of Christ.”

○ **Joy**

Romans 14:17: “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

- Apart from Christ, there is no joy to be found in the Law. What joy is there to have one’s shortcomings continually before his eyes?
- However, what joy is there to know that ALL of the provisions of the Law have been perfectly fulfilled on our behalf!

○ **Sanctification**

- The Law is an external standard. However, man is sinful and needs an inward transformation.
- Therefore, Jesus Christ came in the form of a man, fulfilling all the standards of the Law, and then sent the Person of the Holy Spirit in order to transform us inwardly, just as God demanded.

2 Corinthians 4:16: “Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.”

○ **Security and Hope**

- There is no security to be found in the Law, as it only presents man with an impossible moral standard. In fact, our security, in the Law, rests in our ability to keep it perfectly. Tragically, we know we cannot.
- Yet, in Christ, our security is found in Him, and in His perfect ability to obey all the provisions of the Mosaic Law.
- Had God simply given us the Law, with no promise of the Messiah, we would surely be without hope.

- **Life**

- The Law simply brought with it condemnation and death.
- Yet, Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law and suffered our penalty in our place, thus destroying the power of death over us (the necessary consequence for breaking the Law).

1 Corinthians 15:54: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”

- Phillip Hughes wrote concerning Christ’s eternal priesthood, “He who died once for us now lives, never again to die. The crow has followed the cross, and it is this power of an indestructible life which guarantees that he is indeed our priest forever.”
- Therefore, when we are regenerated by the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit, on the basis of Christ’s finished work, we receive the very life of God Himself – **the indestructible life!**

- **Access and Nearness to God**

Ephesians 2:18: “For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.”

- The Law kept us from God. Consider the veil in the Temple, and all of the requirements regarding our required distance from God.
- John MacArthur comments, “At Sinai the people were fenced off at the foot of the mountain, so they could not approach God. In the Tabernacle and in the Temple the veil stood between them and God’s presence in the Holy of Holies. The Old Covenant not only did not bring men into God’s presence, it forbade them from trying to get there. Without full cleansing, complete forgiveness of sins, they were not qualified. But Jesus, so to speak, came down the mountain to the people and tore down the veil.”
- Richard Phillips writes, “Jesus has opened the way for us, so that we no longer relate to God through an external code, but in a living relationship through faith in Jesus Christ.”

- Consider the great eighteenth-century Charles Wesley hymn, *I Know That My Redeemer Lives*”:

I know that my Redeemer lives,
And ever prays for me;
A token of his love he gives,
A pledge of liberty.

I find him lifting up my head;
He brings salvation near;
His presence makes me free indeed
And he will soon appear.”