**Bethel Christian Fellowship**

**Fair Lawn, NJ**

**Hebrews (20): The Book Of Better Things**

**“Hallelujah! What A Savior!”**

**Hebrews 7:11-25**

**May 19, 2024**

If you were asked to name the most important people in the Old Testament, Melchizedek’s name probably wouldn’t be on your list. After all, he only appears once (in Genesis 14:17-24) and is only referred to once more (in Psalm 110:4). But the author of Hebrews has dipped into both passages and used them to present an eye-opening truth: the Melchizedekian priesthood of Christ is greater than the Levitical priesthood of Aaron. That was the author’s argument in the verses we looked at last week (Heb. 7:1-10), one which was based on history and typology.

In the verses before us today (7:11-25), he takes this argument one step further. Not only is Melchizedek “*greater than*” Aaron, but he has also *replaced* Aaron. It is no longer “the order of Aaron” or “the order of Levi.” It is *forever* “the order of Melchizedek.” But why would God make such a radical change? That’s the question our author is addressing here.

However, his purpose is not simply to compare the flaws of the Old Covenant priesthood with the New Covenant priesthood of Christ. He has a much greater purpose in view, one which serves as the conclusion to this entire section. It is stated in Hebrews 7:25, which is one of the most important verses in the entire letter: “*Therefore he is able to save completely those who draw near to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them*.”

Aaron couldn’t do this. None of his descendants could do this. Jesus Christ is the only one who is able to fully atone for our sins and bring us into the very presence of God, where He is always interceding on our behalf, since He is a priest forever. “*Therefore*,” says our author, He is able to completely save anyone and everyone who draws near to God through Him. And the reason we can know this is because He always lives to make intercession for us.

That’s the primary point of these verses. But to *get* to that point, our author is forced to review some of the fundamental shortcomings and flaws of the Levitical priesthood, and to compare those imperfections with the priesthood of the New Covenant, the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek. The reason, as we now know, is that there were some who were tempted to go back to the old ways of doing things, and to place their hope and confidence and trust in the priesthood of the Old Covenant.

That’s why it was important for these readers, as it is for us, to understand how and why Jesus is a far superior high priest, and a great Savior. So, in verses 11-24, he presents a *number of reasons* why it was necessary to replace the old order with the new, all of which leads him to the conclusion of verse 25.

**A. The Imperfection of the Levitical Priesthood (7:11-14):** “(**11**) *If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come – one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron?* (**12**) *For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law.* (**13**) *He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe,* *and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar.* (**14**) *For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests*.”

Here's our author’s first line of reasoning: If the Old Testament Levitical priesthood could have given the people permanent and free access to God, or offer a sacrifice that would forever cleanse them from the guilt of sin, then there would be no need for “*another priest to come*.” But since the Old Covenant priesthood could not attain that kind of perfection, it was never meant to be permanent. That’s why God spoke of yet another, superior priesthood, not in the line of Aaron but in the line of Melchizedek.

Further, the Levitical priesthood and the Mosaic Law were inseparable. The Law established the terms and governed the ministries of that priesthood. But since our High Priest is from the tribe of Judah (and not Levi), then there must also be a change in the Law. In fact, the entire system of Old Testament Law has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ, which has made the Old Covenant “obsolete” (Heb. 8:13). If it were still in effect today, then Jesus couldn’t be a priest, simply because He wasn’t from the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron.

**B. The Superiority of the New Priesthood (7:15-19):** “(**15**) *And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears,* (**16**) *one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life.* (**17**) *For it is declared: ‘You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.’* (**18**) *The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless* (**19**) (*for the law made nothing perfect*)*, and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God*.”

No priest in Aaron’s line could have ever been described as “*a priest forever*,” simply because each and every one of them were mortal, and eventually died. But our High Priest is immortal; having died once for all, He has risen from the dead. So, even though he wasn’t from the tribe of Judah, he is far superior because the basis of His priestly ministry is the power of His resurrected life. That’s why He’s a priest “*forever, after the order of Melchizedek*” (Cf. Psa. 110:4).

That declaration, says our author, announces that the “former commandment” (the earlier Mosaic law) has been set aside, because it proved to be weak and useless. It was never able to bring us to God and to secure the full and final forgiveness of sins. We, however, are the recipients of a “better hope” through the priestly ministry of Jesus, because He accomplished “once for all” what no priest of Aaron ever could. He fully and finally atoned for all our sins, so that we can now “draw near” to the heavenly Father and enjoy true communion with Him.

**C. The Significance of the Divine Oath (7:20-22):** “*And it was not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath, but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him: ‘The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: you are a priest forever.’ Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.*”

No Levitical priest was ever appointed to his office by God himself taking an oath. But when it comes to His Son, our Savior, God swears by Himself. He appeals to His own character and says to the Lord Jesus: “You are a priest forever. You will never be replaced. You will never be succeeded by anyone else.” That’s why Jesus is the *guarantee* of a *better* covenant (the New Covenant), based on *better* promises, and one which offers a *better* hope. It’s because God’s oath cannot be broken.

**D. The Permanence of Christ’s Priesthood (7:23-25):** “*Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore, he is able to save completely* (“to the uttermost,” ESV) *those who draw near to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them*.”

According to the law of Moses, the law of priestly succession presupposed the eventual death of the high priest (Ex. 29:29-30). They were *all* mortal, and they *all* eventually died. When Aaron died, his son Eleazar took his place (Num. 20:28). When Eleazar died, his son Phineas took his place (Josh. 24:33). In fact, the Jewish historian Josephus calculates that from the time of Aaron to the fall of Jerusalem in 70AD, there were some 83 high priests who served Israel. But because Jesus lives forever, His priesthood is unchanging and permanent.

What’s the conclusion to all this? It’s stated in the last verse (v. 25): “*Therefore*” (because He is an ever-living, unchanging High Priest), He is able to save “*forever*” (NASB), or “*completely*” (NIV), or “*to the uttermost*” (ESV), or “to the utmost degree” anyone and everyone who draws near to God through Him. And how can we *know* this? It’s because He “*always lives to intercede*” for us.

The fact that Jesus is always and forever on our side as He sits at the Father’s right hand *is* the reason why we can have the rock-solid confidence that the salvation He has obtained for us is “*forever*” and “*complete*” and to “*the utmost degree*.” So, we sing, “Hallelujah! What a Savior! Hallelujah! What a Friend! Saving, helping, keeping, loving, He is with me to the end.”

Jesus doesn’t save our souls and then leave us to fend for ourselves throughout the storms of life. Nor does He save our souls and then leave our bodies to rot and decay, for on the final day of judgment the dead in Christ shall rise first (1 Thess. 4:16). But until then, He *always* lives to pray for us and to supply us with the strength we need to endure our trials, and to resist the temptations of the evil one, and to repent when we fail. Jesus is a great Savior, whose death, resurrection, and continual intercession keep us saved!

**Q.**  What, then, should be our response? **A.** First, if we haven’t done so already, we must draw near to Him in saving faith. Then we must continue to draw near to Him – and find in Him the *only* person who truly knows our burdens, and who never ceases to pray for us, and who is *always* ready and able to help! Always!