

14. Understanding the Purpose of the Priesthood of Aaron

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why Melchizedek was a much greater priest than Aaron. This is why God chose to use Melchizedek as an example of the ministry of Christ as our Great High Priest. In our topic today, we are going to see that the writer of Hebrews explains why the priesthood of Aaron and his descendants was important to the nation of Israel but the priesthood of Melchizedek is important to the people of all nations because it helps us to understand the priesthood of Christ for us.

Hebrews 7:11-13 says, “Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need *was there* that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar.” The word translated “perfection” means *the completion or the event that verifies a promise*. The only other place this word is used in the New Testament is Luke 1:45 where we read, “Blessed *is* she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.” Here, we see that Elizabeth told Mary that God would complete His promise to her and give her a son.

If the Old Testament law could have made anyone complete, there would have been no need for Christ to come to pay for sin. However, the law that was given to the people in the Old Testament could not make them right with God. The Jews could only show their faith in the promises of God by offering blood as a covering for their sins until Christ came to take away the sin of the world. As a result, the priesthood of Aaron had a valuable purpose. People could show their faith in the promises of God by bringing sacrifices to Aaron and his descendants to offer them as a temporary covering for their sin. In contrast, Hebrews 9:12 says, “Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.” That meant it was necessary to have a change in the priesthood.

That is why Christ had to be a priest who came from the order of Melchizedek instead of the order of Aaron. This meant that there was a change in the priesthood. That change in the priesthood also meant that there must be a change in the law so that there could be a different kind of priest. As Christ observed the last supper with His disciples, He said in Matthew 26:27-28, “Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.’” Here, we see that Christ was a new priest from a new tribe who offered a new sacrifice for a new covenant. That is another reason why Christ is called a priest from the order of Melchizedek. The sacrifice that Christ offered was Himself as He shed His blood for us. As these verses say, this was the blood of a new covenant that provided forgiveness of sins instead of just covering the sins. We read that Christ had to come from a tribe of another kind than the tribe of Levi.

We see that Christ was from the tribe of Judah instead of the tribe of Levi. However, much more important than the fact that Christ was from the tribe of Judah was the fact that He was a different

kind of priest. This was why Christ had to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek. Hebrews 7:14-17 says, “For *it is* evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. For He testifies: ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.’” Moses never wrote anything about the possibility of someone from the tribe of Judah serving as a priest. That was due to the fact that God did not reveal that part of His plan to Moses.

In the same way, Moses did not write about the fact that Christ would be in the likeness of Melchizedek. Aaron was a priest because of the commandment that God gave to Moses. He served as a priest because He was carrying out the responsibilities that had been given for all of the priests that came from the family of Aaron. They offered sacrifices for the people of Israel until Christ would come to take away sin. In contrast, Christ was not appointed a priest because He was from the family of Aaron. Instead, like Melchizedek, Christ was appointed a priest because of the power of an endless life. In Psalm 110:1, David called Christ his Lord. Then, the quotation that Christ would be a priest forever in the likeness of Melchizedek came from Psalm 110:4. As a result, Christ was appointed as our High Priest because He will be a priest forever.

That is why Hebrews 7:18-19 goes on to say, “For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, *there is the* bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.” The word that is translated “annulling” means *to put away* and that is the way it is translated in the only other place where this word is used in the New Testament. Hebrews 9:26 says, “He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” In this verse, we see that Christ put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Christ put away the former commandment related to the offering of sacrifices as a covering for sin because He came as the final sacrifice that put away sin permanently so that there is no need for continuing sacrifices.

The sacrifices of the Old Testament were offered in weakness because they could never take away sin. The Old Testament sacrifices were unprofitable or useless because they only provided a temporary covering for sin until Christ could come to take away sin. The reason for this is due to the fact that the law could never make anything complete or bring about forgiveness. Instead, the purpose of the law was to show us that it was necessary to come to Christ. Galatians 3:24-25 says, “Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” The law did show us that we were guilty of sin. The law made us aware of the fact that we needed our sins forgiven. However, once we come to Christ we are no longer under the law because Christ has made us complete.

In contrast, Christ brought in a better hope. We can now draw near to God. In the Old Testament, Exodus 19:22 says, “Also let the priests who come near the Lord consecrate themselves, lest the Lord break out against them.” However, Hebrews 4:15-16 says, “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet

without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” In the Old Testament, only the priests could enter into the tabernacle. Only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies and only on the Day of Atonement.

Here, we see that we can come to the throne of grace at any time and we will receive mercy and grace. We are able to draw near to God. James 4:7-10 says, “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.” We are also able to come to God with boldness instead of fear. Here, we see that the Lord will not condemn us for our sins as Christians but will cleanse us and lift us up when we come to Him for cleansing.

Hebrews 7:20-22 says, “And 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”’), by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.” The reason that we can come to God with boldness for cleansing is due to the fact that Christ is our High Priest who speaks to the Father for us. God did not give an oath or promise to the Old Testament priests or say that they would be priests forever. However, He did make that promise about Christ and then confirmed it with an oath.

In Psalm 110:4, we read, “The Lord has sworn and will not relent, ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.’” That is the promise that is quoted in these verses in Hebrews. In this verse, we see that God gave the oath that Christ would be an eternal priest. The writer of Hebrews is making it clear here that God will not change and that His promise is certain. This is important for every one of us as Christians because we know that God will keep His promise to give us eternal life because of the price that Christ paid for our sins.

The word that is translated “surety” means *one that makes a guarantee*. Here, we see that Christ guaranteed our salvation with His own blood. That means our covenant is greater than the old covenant given to Moses. Our salvation is certain because of that guarantee. We know that we have eternal life. As we help our physical and spiritual children understand the fact that Christ guaranteed our salvation with His blood, it helps them to realize that it is an eternal promise with an eternal guarantee. This will help them learn how to explain to others the guarantee that Christ made by shedding His blood so that this guarantee is eternal and means that our eternal life is secure. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand the greatness of this guarantee.