



Growth Group Questions
March 10, 2024
“A Different Kind of Priest”

Context:

The word for “perfection” in verse 11 could also be translated “completeness.” This sentence is pointing to a time when everything has been put into place for God’s final great purpose to be achieved. God’s intention is not just to redeem humankind, but to actually redeem the entire world. One day heaven will come to earth and all will be restored.

The people who are reading this letter/sermon lived with an understanding of the covenant, but it was not the “new” covenant that Jeremiah described in chapter 31. The “old” covenant was based on the sacrifices offered by the Levitical priests. The priests and their work pointed forward to the eventual ‘perfection’, but they couldn’t, by themselves, bring it into reality. Only Jesus – the ultimate high priest – could do that.

One of the things that would have been confusing for the readers of this letter is that Jesus is called a priest, but he was from the tribe of Judah. Priests were descendants of Levi and kings were descended from the tribe of Judah. To think of Jesus as a part of the priestly family would have been difficult for Jewish believers.

That is why Melchizedek is brought into the story. You can read more about him in Genesis 14, as well as the first part of Hebrews 7. Melchizedek was a great high priest who also was not from the tribe of Levi and was also a king. This is strong foreshadowing of Jesus.

As this chapter concludes we hear some wonderful promises. Jesus is able to save completely and he prays on our behalf. There is no need to look anywhere else because Jesus is the unique path into the presence of God. We are told that Jesus meets our need. He does not need to make additional sacrifices on our behalf. He is enough. He has made the one sacrifice that brings freedom and life to each one of us who choose to believe and he reigns with God forever.



Scripture:

Hebrews 7:1-3

7 This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, ² and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, the name Melchizedek means “king of righteousness”; then also, “king of Salem” means “king of peace.” ³ Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever.

Hebrews 7:11-28

¹¹ If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood—and indeed the law given to the people established that priesthood—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 the priesthood is changed, the law must be changed also. 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. 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.”^[a]

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. ²⁰ And it was not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath, ²¹ 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.’”^[a]

²² Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant.

²³ Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; ²⁴ but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. ²⁵ Therefore he is able to save completely^[a] those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. ²⁶ Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. ²⁷ Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. ²⁸ For the law appoints as high priests men in all their weakness; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

Jeremiah 31:31-34

³¹ “The days are coming,” declares the LORD,

“when I will make a new covenant
with the people of Israel
and with the people of Judah.

³² It will not be like the covenant
I made with their ancestors
when I took them by the hand
to lead them out of Egypt,
because they broke my covenant,



though I was a husband to^[a] them,^[b]”
declares the LORD.

³³ “This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel
after that time,” declares the LORD.

“I will put my law in their minds
and write it on their hearts.

I will be their God,
and they will be my people.

³⁴ No longer will they teach their neighbor,
or say to one another, ‘Know the LORD,’

because they will all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest,”

declares the LORD.

“For I will forgive their wickedness
and will remember their sins no more.”



Questions:

1. What does the Bible tell us about the role of the priest?
2. How did Jesus perform the major functions of the priest during His earthly ministry?
3. What does it mean that Jesus' priesthood is based on "the power of an indestructible life"? (Hebrews 7:16)
4. In Jeremiah 31:31-34, we read of a new covenant that God will make with His people. What are the major differences between the old covenant God made with Moses and the new covenant foretold in Jeremiah 31:31-34?
5. What is the "better hope" referred to in Hebrews 7:19?
6. What does it mean that "Jesus is the guarantor of a better covenant"? (Hebrews 7:22)
7. Hebrews 7:23-28 summarizes the characteristics of Jesus that make Him unique from other priests. What are these characteristics and what is their significance for us today?
8. What is the significance that Jesus' priesthood lasts forever? (Hebrews 7:23)
9. What comfort can we draw from the promise that Jesus is our high priest?

Extra Credit:

Throughout the daily entries in Pastor Chad's Lenten Devotional, he talks about the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. On March 5th, he focuses on how Jesus took the disciples into the upper room to share the Passover meal with them. During that time, He would have retold the story of the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt as the last thing He did with His disciples.

How does the story of the Exodus come to life for you when you think of Jesus telling this story to His disciples in the upper room?

