

Hebrews 7:1-28
Jesus is the Superior Priest
2017-10-08

Jesus is the superior Priest who can completely save

Just a few short weeks from now we'll be celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. October 31, 1517, is the day remembered as the beginning of the Reformation. It was the day when Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the church door in Wittenburg. Not long after they were reproduced on the printing press and distributed to a great number of people. In the 95 theses Martin Luther was working to bring attention to, and to get some accountability for, the abuses of the Catholic church. Among the chief of his concerns was the sale of indulgences. The Catholic church believed that it was within the power of the Pope and his priests to pardon and forgive sin. Indulgences could be bought for money, and it was believed that the purchase of an indulgence would secure your safe passage to heaven, or free a loved one already dead from purgatory. John Tetzel, a contemporary of Martin Luther and seller of indulgences, used to sing "As soon as a coin in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs."

Now let me say this morning, if you're counting on your elders to be able to grant you a pardon, we cannot. When we confess sin corporately on Sunday morning, we emphasize that it is God alone who can forgive sin, through the priestly work of Jesus; it's not within the power of your elders to forgive sin. And if we did try to pardon your sins, what guarantee would you have that our words of pardon had any power? You would only need to follow us around for a day to see that we, too, are sinners in need of the same pardon. How then could we pardon others when we ourselves are such sinners. We're in need of one greater, one who is superior as a priest, who can intervene and intercede, who can pardon and forgive, one who can grant peace and impute righteousness.

Scripture Passage: Hebrews 7:1-28

We're here this morning because we've trusted Jesus for our justification and for our peace with God. But before you trusted Jesus, what was your hope? Where did you place your trust for your eternity? Was it in your own works, whether that be through an established religious system or a religion of your own making? Is there anything that would cause you to revert back to that old system, that old way of trying to be at peace with God? For the recipients of this letter, that temptation was a present reality, and it was a genuine temptation. They had been raised with Judaism as their religious system. Christianity was seen as the new kid on the block. But, what created even more pressure was that it wasn't compatible with the Roman rule and religious system, and the church was under ever-intensifying persecution as a result. Why live so radically for Jesus when you could revert back to your former system of belief? Why stand for Jesus and suffer? Wasn't that old system good enough? Didn't it offer some way of dealing with sin? Over the next several chapters of Hebrews we'll see that Jesus is a superior priest, brings a superior covenant, has a superior sanctuary, and offers a superior sacrifice. The emphasis this morning is on **Jesus as the superior priest; one who can completely save**. The priests of the old covenant couldn't save. **Jesus is the superior Priest who can completely save.**

Jesus, the Superior Priest, Brings Peace (vv.1-10)

1. **v.1** "For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God..." - We return to Melchizedek again after he was introduced in the beginning of **Hebrews 5**. The author, however, briefly departed the idea in order to exhort and warn this congregation. They were dull of hearing and so couldn't receive the teaching. But now he returns to Melchizedek, in order to show the magnificence and superiority of Christ. He recounts the story of Abraham and Melchizedek from **Genesis 14**.
2. **v.2** He is king of righteousness (the Hebrew *melek* and *tsedeq*) and also king of peace.
3. **v.3** Without father or mother or genealogy, neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God. The author isn't saying Melchizedek is divine or eternal, but that there is no mention of his genealogy, his birth, or his death (these were all common in Genesis). He was a man, but he pictures the eternal Son of God.
 1. Resembling - This means there is a similarity, not a sameness. Not a theophany or pre-incarnate Christ, but one who came as a type of Christ, to prepare the way for Christ.
4. **v.4** How great was Melchizedek? The **first thing** that points to his greatness is that Abraham gave him a tithe, a tenth of the spoils. These spoils are the finest of the plunder, the top of the heap, the best that could be given.
 1. **v.5** The Levite priests, who descended from Abraham, were commanded to take and receive tithes from the people. But their father Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek. The author even says in **vv.9-10** that it's not a stretch to say that Levi was paying a tithe to Melchizedek, since he was still, in a sense, in the body of Abraham when Abraham paid the tithe.

5. **vv.6-7** The **second thing** that points to the greatness of Melchizedek is that he blessed Abraham, and Abraham received that blessing from him. God spoke to Abraham in **Genesis 12:3** *“I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”* Here was Abraham, through whom all the families of the earth would be blessed, receiving a blessing from one superior to him, Melchizedek.

6. Melchizedek is superior to Abraham, and he is a **type of Christ**. This isn't the author using a fanciful imagination, but being faithful in his interpretation. As a student of Scripture he sees how Melchizedek points forward to Christ. This is the hermeneutic that Jesus taught the disciples on the road to Emmaus, showing how all Scripture was about him and pointed to him (**Luke 24:27**). Melchizedek was the type, living a real life as a real man, and Jesus is the antitype. Melchizedek was the shadow; Jesus is the true object.

1. Melchizedek was king of righteousness and king of peace. Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords.

1. **1 Timothy 6:15–16** *“he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.”*

2. **Revelation 19:11–16** *“Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.”*

3. **Romans 5:1** *“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Because we are justified by faith, declared to be righteous, we are also at peace with God. Only through the supreme King of Righteousness and King of Peace.

2. **Where does your peace come from? Does your peace come from your children being perfectly behaved, your bills being all paid, being in good health, or your marriage going well. Is the basis of your peace in life dependent on whether or not you think you've done enough to satisfy God on any given day, or win the approval of others that you are sure are watching you? Without righteousness, the righteousness of Christ, there is no peace. The basis of our peace is that Jesus has come as the King of Righteousness, living a sinless life, dying a vicarious and atoning death, and was raised for our justification, that we might be declared righteous in the righteousness of Christ. And since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through the greater than Melchizedek, our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Transition: Not only does Jesus, as Superior Priest, bring peace, but he also brings a better hope than was possible through the OT priests.

Jesus, the Superior Priest, Brings a Better Hope (vv.11-19)

1. **v.11** *“Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood...”* - If perfection, completion of salvation, reconciliation with and access to God, could have been through Abraham's descendants, the Levitical priests, then there wouldn't be a need for another line of priests. But Jesus came as the Superior Priest, and he didn't come through the line and tribe of Levi, but through Judah, which were no priests (**v.14**). With the change in priesthood there is also a change in the law (**v.12**). No longer is there the need for priests to offer sacrifices for sins and mediate between God and men; Christ has offered himself and is the one mediator between God and man (**1 Tim. 2:5**).

2. **vv.15-17** *“...not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent...”* - Jesus doesn't occupy his place as Priest because of genealogy or physical descent. Instead, it is through his resurrection, having conquered death.

1. Here the author again quotes from **Psalms 110:4** *“The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.’”* The priesthood of Jesus is unending.

3. **vv.18-19** *“...a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness...”* - The former commandment, the law with its rituals and practices and its priestly service, proved to be weak and useless. It was insufficient; it couldn't remove sins, only cover them temporarily. The law and its priests couldn't bring the worshiper to God, but kept them at a distance from God. But Jesus, the Superior Priest, brings a better hope. Not the covering of sins, but removal of them. Not distance and separation from God, but drawing near to God.

1. First I ask, do you draw near to God? That's how we are oriented and created, to be those who draw near to God in worship. We are designed to be in relationship with God. If you're living life apart from God, you'll find life to be less than what it is intended to be. The author has gone to great length to show that Jesus has made it possible to draw near to God. Let's not overlook this basic fact, that we can and we should be drawing near to God, in fellowship with God. But next I ask, how do you draw near to God? These believers were tempted to revert back to relating to and drawing near to God on the basis of works, according to the Law. The Law only shows us that we cannot draw near to God without the intervening work of another. The Law only offered distance. That is why Jesus came. He fulfilled the Law, and now as a Superior Priest he brings a better hope, offering us access to God through what he has accomplished.

Transition: Peace, a better hope, and lastly, as a Superior Priest he brings a better covenant.

Jesus, the Superior Priest, Brings a Better Covenant (vv.20-28)

1. **vv.20-21** "And it was not without an oath." - This idea of double assurance again, as we saw in **6:17**. When the Lord swears an oath, which is very rare, we have the assurance of his Word and the double assurance of the oath. The Levitical priests took office through succession, through lineage and descent, according to the Law. But Jesus received his priesthood by divine oath.
2. **v.22** Having received his position as priest by oath, he is now the guarantor of a better covenant.
 1. The covenant Jesus mediates is a better covenant. The old covenant dealt with ritual and sacrifice, with external washings and temporary covering of sin. But the new covenant addresses the inward, brings about a changed heart, from a heart of stone to a soft heart of flesh. More will be said about this next week in **Hebrews 8**.
 2. The covenant is guaranteed by Jesus. It doesn't depend on a succession of priests offering daily sacrifices for themselves and then for the people. This covenant is guaranteed by Jesus' one sufficient sacrifice, and his indestructible life (**v.16**).
3. **vv.23-24** "The former priests were many in number..." - The Jewish historian Josephus records that there were 83 priests from the time of Aaron until the Temple was destroyed in AD70. But Jesus holds his position permanently. We have a Priest who is far superior, and it will never be handed off to another.
4. **v.25** "Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost..." - Because of his permanent position, he saves completely, to the full extent. **There's no shift-change in the intercession made for us. There's no baton that will be dropped in transition from one priest to another. He won't run out of steam halfway across the bridge.** It is Jesus who can and will save completely. He is constantly interceding for us.
 1. **He intercedes for our sin and our weakness. At this very moment Jesus is at the right hand of the Father, bringing our needs to the Father. We need forgiveness for our sin, and Jesus is there before the Father showing his nail-scarred hands and the wounds he received in paying the penalty for our sins. We need help in our weakness as we struggle against sin and grow in holiness. Jesus was tempted in all ways like we are, yet without sin, so he knows our need even better than we do, and he makes request to the Father on our behalf.**
5. **vv.26-28** This new covenant, a better covenant than the old, has Jesus ministering as the perfect and eternal High Priest. He is holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners in that he lived in the world but wasn't tainted with the sin in the world, and he is now exalted above the heavens, far superior to the priests of the old covenant.

Conclusion: Romans 8:31-34 "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us." Have you placed all of your trust in Christ for salvation? Or do you still depend, even to a small degree, on your performance, your education, the conduct of your family, or your social action. Do you, like prior to the time of the Reformation, look to earthly priests, trusting in the work of sinful men to somehow pardon your sins? Dear church, trust in Christ and his priestly work alone. Wholeheartedly, unreservedly, unwaveringly and steadfastly, look to and trust in Jesus alone. He is the superior Priest and can save completely.

Benediction - **Jude 24-25**

Family

Table Talk



October 8, 2017

GOD'S TRUTH

Jesus is the Superior Priest who can completely save!

Family Discussion

1. Hope, surety, certainty, faith, salvation. These are words and ideas we have read and discussed over the course of our study through Hebrews so far. The people to whom this book was written needed the truth that was tied to these ideas, and we, too, need that same truth.
2. In Old Testament times, a priest had to make sacrifices for sin. A priest had to deal with their own sin, then the people's sins. Not only did they need to atone for their own sins, but they also died, being mere men. What good news do we now have about our sin and relationship with God?
3. As Christians, we have a certain hope of salvation by faith. Our certain hope is in Jesus, who died and rose and is now serving as High Priest on our behalf. Rejoice in such a certain and great salvation!

Key Verse



"Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them."

Hebrews 7:25

TABLE READING

Lead your kids into God's Word...

1. Hebrews 2:10; 3:6; 4:2; 5:9; 6:9; 6:11; 6:18; 6:19; 7:19; 7:22
2. Leviticus 16; Hebrews 7:23-27, Romans 8:1-4, 31-34
3. Romans 1:16-17; Romans 5:1-2; 8:38-39; Hebrews 4:14-16

Scripture Memory: Hebrews 10:12-13

"AND THESE WORDS THAT I COMMAND YOU TODAY SHALL BE ON YOUR HEART. YOU SHALL TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY TO YOUR CHILDREN, AND SHALL TALK OF THEM WHEN YOU SIT IN YOUR HOUSE, AND WHEN YOU WALK BY THE WAY, AND WHEN YOU LIE DOWN, AND WHEN YOU RISE. YOU SHALL BIND THEM AS A SIGN ON YOUR HAND, AND THEY SHALL BE AS FRONTLETS BETWEEN YOUR EYES. YOU SHALL WRITE THEM ON THE DOORPOSTS OF YOUR HOUSE AND ON YOUR GATES." - DEUTERONOMY 6:6-9 (ESV)