**Hebrews 7:1-28 Christ Above Melchizedek**

**October 5-6, 2016**

*The author of Hebrews comes again to the issue of Jesus as our Savior and Priest, offering the ultimate sacrifice to provide a way to God. Now we come to the focal point of the book of Hebrews. Ch. 7 concerns the central, most significant part of Judaism – the priesthood. Without the priests, no sacrifices could be made, and without the sacrifices, no forgiveness of sins could be had. Obedience to the law was exceedingly important, but the offering of sacrifices was even more essential and only the priesthood could offer them. It’s no wonder the priesthood was exalted in Judaism. Hebrews introduces Melchizedek in chapter 5. There is much conjecture about the identity and nature of this mysterious OT person. It is best to view Melchizedek as an actually, historical human being, whose priestly ministry is a type of Christ’s later ministry. He was an ancient man who God intended to serve as a picture of Jesus Christ. His life and ministry served as a very limited analogy of what Christ would do much later during his earthly ministry.*

*In the same was that Melchizedek’s priesthood was superior to the Levitical Aaronic priesthood, so also is Christ’s ministry superior to Melchizedek’s. Jesus’ priesthood is universal, royal, righteous, peaceful, personal, and eternal. Christ’s perfect and complete ministry far surpassed and superseded the old, temporary system of sacrifices. Try to imagine how the first readers felt as they heard this amazing news of Jesus.*

*“Melchizedek, King of Salem” – the lack of biographical and genealogical particulars for this ruler, whose name meant “righteous king” and who was a king-priest over ancient Jerusalem, allowed for later revelation to use him as a type of Christ. His superior status in Abram’s day was witnessed by the king of Sodom, the first to meet Abram returning in victory, deferring to Melchizedek before continuing with his request, and Abram, both accepting a blessing from and also giving a tithe to this priest-king. He was called a priest of Most High God, El Eyon, meaning sovereign Lord, which indicated that Melchizedek worshiped and served the same of whom Abram worshiped.*

*“Type” – a figure, representation, or symbol of something to come, as an event in the OT foreshadows another in the NT. Types generally find their fulfillment in the person and ministry of Christ, but they sometimes relate to God, his people, or some other reality. Jesus said the bronze serpent in the wilderness was in some sense typical of his own crucifixion (John 3:14-15). The writer of Hebrews pointed out that the tabernacle typically foreshadowed the person and work of Christ (Heb 9-10). The apostle Paul mentions Adam as a type of him (Jesus) who was to come (Rom. 5:14). Melchizedek is said to be a type of Christ.*

What about Jesus makes him unique and different from other religious leaders?

**Read Hebrews 7**

**Read Genesis 14:18-20**

Who is Melchizedek as described in these passages?

How was Melchizedek different from Israel’s priests? And how was he similar to Christ?

 *“Without father” v.3 – the Levitical priesthood was hereditary. But Melchizedek’s was not. His parentage was unknown because they were irrelevant to his priesthood.)*

In what ways does Hebrews chapter 7 show us that Christ was greater than the Old Covenant and Israel’s priests? What facts does the author give in order to prove that?

 *(“Perfection” v.11 – complete reconciliation with and access to God – salvation. The Levitical system and its priesthood could not save anyone from their sins.*

 *“Change of law” v.12-14 – Since Christ is the Christian’s high priest and he was of the tribe of Judah, not Levi, his priesthood is clearly beyond the law which was the authority for the Levitical priesthood. This is proof that the Mosaic law had been abrogated. The Levitical system was replaced by a new priest, offering a new sacrifice, under a new covenant. He abrogated the law by fulfilling it and providing the perfection that the law could never accomplish.)*

How did Melchizedek’s life and ministry typify the later life and ministry of Jesus?

 *(“Like” v.3 – “made to be like”, the resemblance to Christ rests upon the way Melchizedek’s history is reported in the OT, not upon Melchizedek himself. He was not the preincarnate Christ, but similar to Christ in that his priesthood was universal, royal, righteous, peaceful, and unending.*

 *“Gave a tenth” v.4 – it was common for people to give a tithe to a god or his representative. Abraham the father of Hebrew faith gave a tithe to Melchizedek. That proves that he was superior to Abraham. The lesser person tithes the greater.*

 *“Receive tithes” v.5 – by authority invested in them after the establishment of the Mosaic law, the Levitical priests collected tithes from fellow Israelites. The submission of Israelites was not to honor the priests but to honor the law of God.*

 *“Here… there” v.8 – reference to the Levitical law whose system was still active at the time (“here”) and to the earlier historical incident recorded in Gen 14 (“there”). The Levitical priesthood changed as each priest died until it passed away altogether, whereas Melchizedek’s priest hood is perpetual since the record about his priesthood does not record his death.*

 *“Levi…paid tithes” v.9-10 – in an argument based on seminal headship, the writer observes it is possible to speak of Levi paying tithes to Melchizedek, it is the same kind of argument Paul employed to demonstrate that when Adam sinned, we all sinned.)*

Discuss the question asked in verse 11. Why was there still need for another priest to come? Why is it significant that Christ became priest *not* by way of ancestory.

Why is it so important for us that Jesus is alive now? What work is Jesus doing now as our chief priest?

Why was Jesus’ death the most important event in history? How can we benefit from it now?

**Read Numbers 8:5-19**

What do you think were the limitations of this OT priesthood? Why has God put the old law aside?

 *(“Fleshly commandment” v.16 – the law dealt only with the temporal experience of Israel. The forgiveness which could be obtained even on the Day of Atonement was temporary.*

 *“Weakness” v.18 – the law was weak in that it could not save or bring about inward change in a person.*

 *“Nothing perfect” v.19 – the law saved no one, rather it cursed everyone.*

 *“Draw near to God” v.19 – this is the key phrase in this passage, drawing near to God is the essence of Christianity as compared with the Levitical system, which kept people outside His presence. As believer priests, we are all to draw near to God – that is a characteristic of priesthood.)*

**Read Matthew 27:50-51**

What is the significance of the temple veil being torn? How does that relate to Christ’s priesthood?

**Reflection**

What does it mean for you personally that Jesus Christ is your perfect High priest forever?

 *(“Surety” v.22 – “guarantor”, Jesus himself guarantees the success of his new covenant of salvation.*

 *“Better covenant” v.22 – the New Covenant, discussed more next week*

 *“Holy…separate” v.26 – in his relationship to God, Christ is holy (without any pollution), in his relationship to man, he is harmless (without any evil or malice), in relationship to himself he is undefiled (free from contamination), and separate from sinners as he had no sin nature to be the source of any act of sin.*

 *“Daily” v.27 – whenever the Levitical high priest sinned he was required to offer sacrifices for himself. Whenever the people sinned, he also had to offer sacrifices for them. These occasions could be daily. Then annually on the Day of Atonement, he has to again offer sacrifices for himself and for the people. Christ had no sin and needed no sacrifice for himself. And only one sacrifice (by him) was needed – one time only, for all men, for all time.)*

How can the truths revealed in this study give you more confidence to draw near to God in any and every circumstance?

 *(“Uttermost” v .25 – perfection*

 *“Intercession” v.25 – bringing a petition to a king on behalf of someone.)*

What changes need to take place in your prayer life as a result of this study?