

58-07-01.wpd --A Better Covenant
priesthood, the Law, status quo, allegiance, Messiah
Heb 7:1-22

All that the world calls great is surpassed by what is offered in Christ.

INTRODUCTION:

--We are raised with both good and bad ideas that our personal world teaches as the way things are supposed to be. If we deviate from those concepts, society may scold or persecute us. This was true for the early Hebrew Christians. The author of Hebrews was showing that what they had considered sacred and permanent was now gone. The whole Jewish system of priestly ministry and sacrificial worship under the Old Covenant had been replaced by the New Covenant. But it was hard for them to let go of their former allegiance to the old system.

--Many today do not want to part with the popular thinking of society, or what they are used to in life, or the value-system they were raised with. But **HOM.idea.**

I. "What Could Be Better Than What We've Got?"

A. Something in Scripture that upsets the *status quo*: Melchizedek

1. Who was he? A priest-king who met Abraham when he returned from defeating the kings who had captured the city where his nephew Lot lived-- Gen 14:18-20. Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything. (That's it!)
2. How was His priesthood understood? Prophetically-- Psa 110:1-4. The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies. Your troops will be willing on your day of battle. Arrayed in holy majesty, from the womb of the dawn you will receive the dew of your youth. The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

B. What were Melchizedek's Messianic credentials?

1. He was the "*King of Salem*" [*peace*] (OT prophesy said that the Messiah would be "*the Prince of Peace*"-- Isa 9:6)
2. His name "*Melchizedek*" = "*king of righteousness*"-- Isa 9:7. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on

David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and **righteousness** from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this. -- Jer 23:5, "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is **just** and **right** in the land."

3. He was truly a mediator between God and man, "*Priest of the Most High God*" (first mention in the Bible of a priest)
 4. What was His Messianic significance?-- v.3, *Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever.* (His ministry was endless!)
- C. The reason Melchizedek had a greater priesthood than the Levitical priesthood, which the Jews still held dear, was that...
1. Melchizedek blessed Abraham (v.4-7, *Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people--that is, their brothers--even though their brothers are descended from Abraham. This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater.*)
 2. Abraham tithed to Melchizedek, AND-- v.9-10, *One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham, because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor.*
 3. If the Levitical ministry was God's final plan, no Melchizedek-like Messiah would be needed- v.11-12, *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? For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law.*

TRANS: We have many entities in life that demand our allegiance... *family allegiance, scholastic allegiance, patriotic and political party allegiances, employment and professional allegiances, allegiances to special interest groups or fraternal organizations, even religious and denominational allegiances.* But there is a greater allegiance that came before any of these and still surpasses any of these: **our allegiance to our Creator.** All of these common ties may be good, all may promise certain benefits, but there is a "*better covenant*" of blessing that comes from God. When allegiances clash, as they often do, our allegiance to God must overrule all others. **The world exalts many things as great, but all of them are surpassed by what we have in Christ.**

II. We Have a Better Covenant, a Better Promise, Through Christ

- A. This was a "better covenant" because it stepped beyond the pattern of the Jewish Law-- v.13-14, *He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.* (The implication is that, patterned after the Gentile Melchizedek's ministry, the whole world would benefit!)
- B. How does Jesus fulfill the Messianic qualification patterned after Melchizedek?-- v.15-17, *And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, 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. For it is declared: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."* (this is declared so by the Resurrection of Jesus!)
- C. What did this mean for Law-keeping Jewish Christians?
1. The Old Covenant is finished. It couldn't offer what was really needed-- v.18, *The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless* (What *was* really needed? Jesus had said in Mat 5:48, Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.)
 2. What the Law couldn't do, Christ did on the Cross, so that all can approach God through His sacrifice-- v.19, *for the law made nothing perfect*), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God. [from a hymn: "Nothing in my hand I bring; only to Thy Cross I cling!"]
- D. The priesthood of the New Covenant is not subject to human frailty, as in the OT. Our new High priest is as everlastingly solid as the oath God swore in establishing Him-- v.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.*

CONCLUSION:

--If there is anything we still cling to, thinking that by this activity or that allegiance, we can get on God's good side and approach Him in a more worthy manner, then we need to hear these arguments from the author of Hebrews. **There is nothing that this world calls great that is not surpassed by what we find in Jesus.** Nothing will please God more than seeing our commitment and allegiance by faith to the One over Whom He declared on the Mount of Transfiguration, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him."

Heb 7:1-22 (NIV) 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, his name 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, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever. {4} Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! {5} Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people--that is, their brothers--even though their brothers are descended from Abraham. {6} This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. {7} And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater. {8} In the one case, the tenth is collected by men who die; but in the other case, by him who is declared to be living. {9} One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham, {10} because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor. {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. {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. {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.'" {22} Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.