

Hebrews Chapter Seven (vv.11-19)

Hebrews 7.1-3: The **Person** of Melchizedek. 7.4-10: The **Prominence** of Melchizedek. 7.11-28: The **Priesthood** of Christ after the Order of Melchizedek.

There is a chiasmic structure to the verses which emphasise various aspects of the priesthood of Christ in relation to *Psalm 110.4: The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.*

- The **perfection** of Christ's priesthood (vv.11-14). *After the order of Melchizedek.*
 - The **perpetuity** of Christ's priesthood (vv.15-19). *For ever.*
 - The **promise** of Christ's priesthood (vv.20-22). *The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent.*
 - The **perpetuity** of Christ's priesthood (vv.23-25). *For ever.*
- The **perfection** of Christ's priesthood (vv.26-28). *After the order of Melchizedek.*

The Perfection of Christ's Priesthood (vv.11-14)

11 *If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for ~~under~~ upon) it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?* The Levitical priesthood could not effect 'perfection' or spiritual maturity. Those who clung to Judaism and the law were spiritual babes (Hebrews 5.13, Galatians 3.24). *Hebrews 10.1: For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.* Why? The Levitical priesthood could not remove sins, only cover them (Hebrews 10.1-4, 11-14). It could not once and for all cleanse the conscience (Hebrews 9.9, 14, 10.2) or provide access into the very presence of God (Hebrews 10.19-22). All this required 'another Priest', one far greater than Aaron. Praise God we have these blessings in Christ. Are we living in their enjoyment? The word 'another' signifies 'one of a different kind'. The Lord Jesus is Priest after the order of Melchizedek, not Aaron. *Gooding: The very announcement of this new priest belonging to a different order exposes the fact that the old order was weak and useless (cf. v.18).*

12 *For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.*

As the Levitical priesthood could not effect 'perfection', it was inadequate and required changing. But, not only the priesthood. The law rested **upon** (see v.11) the foundation of the priesthood. *Flanigan: The law is one, but there are moral and ceremonial demands within it and these required priestly ministry. Therefore the law was based upon the principle of priesthood. The law provided the priesthood and the priesthood maintained the law. As such they would stand or fall together.* If the foundation or priesthood is changed, then the law that rests upon it must also be changed. *FF Bruce: The law was a temporary dispensation of God, valid only until Christ came to inaugurate the age of perfection.* Not only the priesthood, but also the law were temporary provisions to **guard** and **guide** until Christ (Galatians 3.24).

13 *For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.*

14 *For it is evident that our Lord (hath) sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.* The law required that only those of the family of Aaron could serve as priests, yet the Lord Jesus 'sprang' (arose) out of the tribe of Judah, the **royal** rather than the **priestly** line. How then could He be a priest? Because a change in priesthood has effected a change in the law!! **Note.** The word 'pertaineth' is the same word used in 2.14 'took part (of flesh and blood)'. The Lord Jesus voluntarily and willingly became a man and was born of the tribe of Judah. The word 'sprang' is used of the sprouting up of a plant or rising of the sun, both of which are appropriate figures of the Lord Jesus (see Numbers 24.17, Zechariah 6.12, Matthew 4.16, Luke 1.78, 2 Peter 1.19).

The Perpetuity of Christ's Priesthood (vv.15-19)

15 *And it is yet far more evident: for that (since) after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest,*

16 *Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.*

It is even more obvious ('evident') that the Aaronic priesthood was imperfect (v.11) as Another Priest (of a different sort) has arisen after the order of Melchizedek, rather than the order of Aaron. The Lord Jesus is a priest 'after the similitude' or likeness of Melchizedek. *Melchizedek was made like unto the Son of God as to His **Person**. The Son of God was made like unto Melchizedek as to his **office**.* Under the law, one was made a priest through a specific 'carnal (**natural** rather than *fleshly*) commandment'. It was **natural** in the sense that the Levitical priesthood was based on human birth right and descent. One only became a priest because his father was a priest. This also illustrates the temporary and transitory nature of the Levitical priesthood as every one of them eventually died and was succeeded by another. However, Christ has *become* (once and for all) and *continues to be* a priest on the basis of 'the power of an endless life'. This is the inherent power (John 5.26, 10.18) of His permanent, indestructible and indissoluble life. The office and ministry of this High Priest is eternal and permanent. He is priest for ever (v.17).

18 For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.

19 For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in (thereupon) of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

The 'commandment going before' or 'old commandment' was the ancient law which required, instituted and regulated the Levitical priesthood (v.16). The command was 'weak' and 'unprofitable' (useless) because the priesthood it effected was temporary could not bring perfection. Paul speaks of this in Romans 8.3 where he states that the law was 'powerless'. It could not save us from the guilt and power of sin, nor give the power to keep its requirements. Note. The specific **command** regarding the priesthood was the embodiment of the **whole law** (v.19, cf.v.11). Given the failure of the law to bring perfection it has been 'set aside' or 'disannulled' (John 1.17, Romans 6.14, 10.4, Galatians 3.24).

If the law was 'weak' and 'useless' why was it given? There is nothing intrinsically wrong with the law (Psalm 19.7, Romans 7.12, 1 Timothy 1.8). It was weak and useless because of those to whom it was given, **sinful mankind** (Romans 8.3). The law was given:

- To increase mankind's knowledge and awareness of sin (Romans 3.20).
- To reveal sin in its true character as transgression (Galatians 3.19).
- To reveal the vast number of our sins (Romans 5.20).
- To shut every mouth and establish the guilt of the whole world (Romans 3.19).
- To restrain the lawless and ungodly and protect society (1 Timothy 1.9-10).
- To guard and guide the nation of Israel until Christ came (Galatians 3.24).
- To bear witness through prophecy and types to the righteousness available in Christ (Romans 3.21).

Praise God, perfection (and all this includes, see v.11) is now available in a 'better hope'. This hope has been introduced 'on the ground of' or 'in place of' the law. *Romans 3.21-22: But now the righteousness of God **without the law** is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.* This better hope centres in Christ and His priesthood. Although this hope clearly has a future dimension of heavenly blessing (2.10, 3.6, 6.18-20), it also offers a present reality by which we can now draw near to God. What a privilege this is (4.14-16). Under the law, only the priests were able to draw near to God (Exodus 19.22, 24.2, Ezekiel 40.46). Even they were barred from access into the immediate presence of God by the veil. The Holy of Holies was inaccessible. But now, through our Great High Priest, it is gloriously possible to draw nigh to God (6.19-20, cf. Ephesians 2.13, 18).

Exodus 3.5: *And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.*

Luke 15.1: *Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.*

No access or standing before God on the basis of law (Moses), but there was access into the presence of the Lord Jesus on the basis of grace.

Luke 24.15: *And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.*

James 4.8: *Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.*

James 4.8: *Come close to God and he will come close to you. You are sinners: get your hands clean again. Your loyalty is divided: get your hearts made true once more.*