

Sunday October 30th 2011
The Letter to the Hebrews
Part Twenty Three

1). Heb 7:11 ¶ *Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? 12 For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. 13 For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. 14 For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. 15 And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest 16 who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. 17 For He testifies: "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."*

a). We had seen last week that the scripture taught us that if the priesthood of the Levites was able to achieve perfection, to bring people to the place of completion, then there was no need for ‘another priest’ to rise ‘according to the order of Melchizedek’. If perfection were possible then all that was needed was another priest according to the order of Aaron.

b). Now from the very inception of the tabernacle in the wilderness in which the priesthood according to the order of Aaron ministered we are told – Ex 26:30 *"And you shall raise up the tabernacle according to its pattern which you were shown on the mountain.*

c). The tabernacle in the wilderness was then made in the likeness of the Tabernacle that exists in the heavens, it was a copy of the original.

d). Not only was the tabernacle structure a copy, but the contents of the tabernacle in the wilderness, the articles of furniture, were also made in the likeness of those things that already existed in the heavens - Ex 25:40 *"And see to it that you make them according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.*

Nu 8:4 *Now this workmanship of the lampstand was hammered gold; from its shaft to its flowers it was hammered work. According to the pattern which the LORD had shown Moses, so he made the lampstand.*

e). And so we see therefore that the tabernacle in the wilderness served the very purpose which is described in - Heb 8:4 *For if He were on earth, He would*

not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; 5 who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."

f). We see then that the Levites served ‘the copy and shadow of the heavenly things’ – that which was a copy and a shadow were to point the way to that which was the reality. In the same way, the Levitical priests were themselves also just a shadow pointing to the One who was to minister in the heavens.

g). And being a copy and a shadow, neither the high priest, nor his ministry on the earth could accomplish that which The High Priest and His ministry could accomplish in the heavens – Ro 3:20 *Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

h). The ministry in the earthly tabernacle accomplished only in type that which was reserved for the reality in the heavens. Because the Levitical sacrifices and priesthood could not actually provide within itself the salvation of the soul, it follows that a new priesthood must be instituted that would. And because the salvation of the soul needed to be provided, a new priesthood was brought in, with a new Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the order of Melchizedek. The word in Hebrews 7:11 translated ‘another’; ‘that another priest should rise’, is the Greek word ‘heteros’, which means of another kind.

i). That is, since the Levitical priesthood brought nothing to completion, not merely another priest was needed, but another priest of a different kind. It could not be another priest according to the order of Aaron, but a Priest of entirely a different order – that according to the order of Melchizedek.

j). Ga 3:24 *Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

2). 12 *For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.*

a). The priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek was put in place of the priesthood according to the order of Aaron; the blood of God, the reality, was put in the place of the blood of animals, the type – but this could only be done by changing the law governing the priesthood. The law governing the priesthood as found in the Mosaic economy needed to be replaced in favor of another which would provide for an order of priesthood that would function successfully in the very thing that the law of Moses could not do in that it was weak through the flesh.

b). 13 *For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar.*

c). Since the law of Moses required that the priests should come from the tribe of Levi, a new priesthood, not according to the order of Aaron, but coming

out of the tribe of Judah, must set aside that law. And the law being set aside is not in the sense of it having been rejected, but rather set aside having been fulfilled in Christ.

3). *15 And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest 16 who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. 17 For He testifies: "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."*

a). We see in the scripture here a most significant contrast between the appointment of the high priest according to the order of Aaron and the appointment of the High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

b). With regards to the copy and shadow the priests were appointed according to a standard [law] which related to a physical human body – The priests had to come from a particular tribe, that of Levi; and then from a particular family within that tribe, the family of Aaron, and then their fitness for the office of priest even among the male members of that family was further determined by physical qualifications. The priests had to be without bodily blemish and ceremonially pure Le 21:16 ¶ *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 17 "Speak to Aaron, saying: 'No man of your descendants in succeeding generations, who has any defect, may approach to offer the bread of his God. 18 'For any man who has a defect shall not approach: a man blind or lame, who has a marred face or any limb too long, 19 'a man who has a broken foot or broken hand, 20 'or is a hunchback or a dwarf, or a man who has a defect in his eye, or eczema or scab, or is a eunuch. 21 'No man of the descendants of Aaron the priest, who has a defect, shall come near to offer the offerings made by fire to the LORD. He has a defect; he shall not come near to offer the bread of his God. 22 'He may eat the bread of his God, both the most holy and the holy; 23 'only he shall not go near the veil or approach the altar, because he has a defect, lest he profane My sanctuaries; for I the LORD sanctify them.'" 24 And Moses told it to Aaron and his sons, and to all the children of Israel.*

c). All of this of course relates entirely to an outward appearance and in this sense the appointment of the high priest can be seen as arbitrary and according to the flesh. No matter how ill-suited an individual was or how reluctant he was to take the office the law made him a priest because of his pedigree and his physical appearance. Also the performance of his duties as high priest would come from an outside compulsion, that which was dictated by the law, rather than from an inward motivation.

d). It is not surprising then that many of those who held this office were corrupt and immoral.

e). Of course that which we can't miss in the absence of physical defect in the Aaronic priest is the picture of Christ who would come without defect as the

sinless sacrifice and then ministers as High Priest having been brought to completion completely apart from sin – 1Pe 1:18 *knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*

f). And we might also remember that which the scripture says concerning those who will in that Day be kings and priests with Him - Eph 5:26 *that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.*

g). The Levitical priests of course, even without physical defect, would grow old and die and although the office of high priest would have continuity there was no continuity with regards to character or integrity in those who succeeded to that office.

h). Christ on the other hand does not become High Priest based on genealogy and physical appearance, but ‘according to the power of an endless life’, appointed by God ‘according to the order of Melchizedek’.

i). We will remember that as there is no scriptural or historical record of Melchizedek’s death we are able to make the assumption that he is a priest ‘continually’. And it is in this respect that Christ becomes High Priest according to the same order. He does not follow Melchizedek through genealogy but through the fact that He lives forever, therefore His High Priestly ministry is unchanging.

j). Melchizedek, because there is no record of his death, ‘still lives’ – Christ’s endless life however is not based on the absence of a record, but on the fact that He rose from the dead by the power of the Triune Godhead. Christ’s High Priestly ministry is not founded on the absence of death, but on the basis of death not being able to keep Him from life - Re 1:18 *"I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.*

Ro 6:9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.

4). Heb 7:18 *For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, 19 for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. 20 And inasmuch as He was not made priest without an oath 21 (for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: "The LORD has sworn And will not relent, 'You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek'"), 22 by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.*

a). V17-19 pick up again on that which we saw in v16 – there is the ‘annulling’ of the former commandment that had to do with genealogy and physical appearance in favor of the bringing in of a better hope based on the power of an endless life. That which was of the flesh is now replaced by that which is of the Spirit.

b). The word translated ‘former’, ‘former commandment’ in v18 is not just talking about a precedence in time, but rather the preliminary character of the commandment which was always destined to be done away with by that which would replace it.

c). The ‘former commandment’ was replaced, and was always going to be replaced, ‘because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect’.

d). As we saw last week the law was not able to bring anyone to that place of completion, but the ‘better hope’, which is based upon ‘an endless life’ enters the presence behind the veil ‘through which we draw near to God’ - Heb 6:19 *This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, 20 where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.*

e). And this is accomplished by faith, not by following the letter of the law Ro 8:2 *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

5). Our scripture from Chapter 7 then continues - 20 *And inasmuch as He was not made priest without an oath 21 (for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: "The LORD has sworn And will not relent, 'You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek'")*,

a). And here once again we see God the Father swearing an oath, not this time directly concerning the promise made to Abraham, but rather concerning the One in whom that promise would be realized. This oath, which is recorded in Psalms 110:4, is as we see concerning Christ’s priesthood ‘according to the order of Melchizedek’. ‘The Lord has sworn and will not relent’.

b). So we see that God swore an oath concerning the promise given to Abraham and his descendants that they would be heirs of the world and an oath concerning the Priesthood of the One who would bring that promise to fulfillment.

c). As a result of this Jesus has become ‘a surety of a better covenant’.

d). The priesthood of Melchizedek according to whose order Christ is High Priest both precedes and is superior to the Aaronic priesthood established under the Mosaic economy – this we saw witnessed in the tithe that Abraham paid to Melchizedek.

e). Christ's Priesthood is based on the power of an endless life which is superior to that established by 'a fleshly commandment'.

f). Christ's Priesthood is superior to that of Aaron as it is established by an oath given by God the Father whereas that of Aaron was not.

g). Christ's Priesthood is superior as it provides 'a better hope, by which we may draw near to God', whereas the priesthood of Aaron 'made nothing perfect'.

h). Christ's Priesthood is superior as it based on the offering of Himself as a sacrifice whereas that of Aaron offered only the blood of bulls and goats.

i). Christ's Priesthood is superior as it as an endless Priesthood whereas that of Aaron was prevented from continuing by death.

j). The priesthood of Aaron was always just a copy and a shadow of that which was its superior, the reality that is fulfilled in Christ.

k). And so as a result of this Jesus is 'a surety', a pledge, of that which must of necessity, considering all that we have looked at, be a 'better covenant'.

l). So we have had the promise, the swearing of two oaths and now Christ Himself as the pledge.

6). Heb 7:23 *Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. 24 But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. 25 Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.*

a). V23-24 confirms that which we have already seen – the priests according to the order of Aaron were many 'because they were prevented by death from continuing', therefore there could be no consistency, other than the practice of the ordinances, between each ministry. But Christ on the other hand 'because He continues forever, has an unchangeable Priesthood'. It is unchangeable in character, unchangeable in integrity, unchangeable in compassion, unchangeable in grace and mercy - Heb 4:14 *Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*

b). V25 begins with the word 'therefore' – because of all the things we have just noted, our High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, 'is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him....'.

c). The phrase 'save to the uttermost' carries with it the notion of a total salvation, a salvation of the spirit, soul and body.

d). The salvation of the spirit is as we know the free gift of eternal life as a result of the death of our Passover Lamb - Eph 2:8 *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,*

1Co 5:7 ¶ *Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.*

e). The salvation of the soul is that to which we presently work in conjunction with Christ's High Priestly ministry, until our faith is brought to completion - 1Pe 1:9 *receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of your souls.*

f). The salvation of our body is intimately connected to the salvation of our soul and speaks of our receiving a covering of glory to return us to that condition that the Man and the Woman were in before the fall - Ro 8:19 *For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; 21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. 23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.*

g). And we see in v25 that being 'saved to the uttermost', receiving the salvation soul and body after receiving the free gift is for 'those who come to God through Him' – and this phrase must take us to that which we have seen in – Heb 10:19 ¶ *Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and having a High Priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.*

h). Being 'saved to the uttermost' then is for those who will put to death their flesh just as Christ suffered in His flesh, for those who will be the continuous living sacrifice now so as to attain the out resurrection from the dead in that Day - Ro 8:16 *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 ¶ and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

i). 2Ti 2:11 *This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. 12 If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us.*

j). And, according to the scripture, the Lord is able to ‘save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him’, *since He always lives to make intercession for them.*

k). The word translated ‘intercession’ here has more to do with intervention than merely intercession and in this we would return again to Hebrews Chapter 4 and our Lord’s experiences as the Son of Man that enable Him to sympathize with our weaknesses and as a consequence provide grace that is able to help in our time of need - Heb 4:15 *For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

l). Those who by faith embrace His grace and His mercy would be those who are described as the heirs of the promise, those who come to God through Him by their suffering and dying to their flesh, those who in that Day will receive the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls and therefore will be saved to the uttermost, entering the presence behind the veil - Joh 14:6 *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

7). Heb 7:26 *For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; 27 who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. 28 For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever.*

a). According to v26, it is right, it is proper, that Christ should become High Priest for us and again in this we should see Christ’s experiences as the Son of Man. In conjunction with His ability to sympathize with our weaknesses He is also in His character ‘holy’; He is ‘harmless’, without malice towards us, without any ulterior motive; He is ‘undefiled’ by sin and ‘separate from sinners’ in that as a Man He did not sin. All of these qualities would of course be in sharp contrast to the inherently wicked and sinful men who occupied the position of high priest upon the earth.

b). Also, as a result of that which was accomplished at His first incarnation, He has ‘become higher than the heavens’ – and this does not just refer to His geographical location but to His superiority over the present ruler of this world and his fallen angels - Eph 1:19 *and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and*

dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

c). And Christ, as our High Priest does not need to offer up daily sacrifices for sins for Himself and for those to whom He ministers, in the way that the earthly high priests had to do as he has, by the offering of Himself, accomplished this ‘once for all’ – no further sacrifice is therefore needed - Ro 6:10 *For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.*

d). V28 once again draws a contrast between the law and the oath – the law of fleshly commandment appointed men as high priests who were inherently wicked through their corrupt sin nature, men who were themselves in need of a High Priest as they by no means had reached that place of completion [it is true that these high priests would enter into the presence of God once each year, but this they did by commandment not by rite of passage]. Whereas on the other hand Christ, as Son, has been appointed by the oath of the Father that has superseded the law having been ‘perfected forever’ - Heb 5:8 *though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. 9 And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal[age lasting] salvation to all who obey Him, 10 ¶ called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek,"*

e). And so as Chapter 7 draws to a close we will also draw to a close for today – continuing next week if the Lord is willing.