

Christian Study

Lesson 262

Be Light

Focusing on Church beyond Sunday

A Closer Look at the New Covenant

A New Priesthood

Have you ever worked at a job you totally despised? Almost everyone reading this could answer yes to this question. As bad as your job may have been, you at least had a chair to sit on and you could point at something just accomplished and say, "I helped with that."

That was not the case for the Priest in Israel. They were never able to rest while working their shift and not even a chair was allowed in their office. Despite any desire to try something new, they were bound to their position because they were descendants of Levi. They had no other option. You may be thinking, "I bet they could hardly wait to get up in the morning." Yet, in spite of their job description, the Levitical priests worked tirelessly day after day, week after week, year after year carrying out the duty of their office from the days of Moses until the time of Christ. Despite all the effort they made, their work was never done.

The Levites were appointed by God to be priests under the Old Covenant, but when the New Covenant took effect, all of this changed. Let's take a closer look.

Key Verse: Hebrews 5:5-6 "So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father." **6** And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

Jesus did not take the glory of becoming a high priest on Himself, God declared Him to be high priest and His tenure as high priest will be forever. The word "forever" is defined simply as "for all time"

The Levitical Priesthood

"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." **Hebrews 7:11-12**

"Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.**12** But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God." **Hebrews 10:11**

The priests of the Old Covenant stood up all the time to perform their religious duties. They offered the same sacrifice day after day and "again and again" which was not able to take away sins. Also, they could not sit down because the religious duties they performed were not strong enough to take sins away once and for all time.

Jesus and the Sanhedrin

John 11:47-53 records what took place at a meeting of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was a council of 71 men made up of the chief priests, the scribes and elders, who were the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The High Priest served as president. They ruled after matters affecting Judaism and Israel in general. Their decrees were binding on all Jews whether in Israel or scattered abroad. Let's go to the passage and then answer the questions that follow.

John 11:47-53 "Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. "What are we accomplishing?" they asked. "Here is this man performing many miraculous signs.**48** If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." **49** Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! **50** You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish."**51** He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, **52** and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.**53** So from that day on they plotted to take his life."

Q Who called the meeting?

A

Q For what purpose?

A

Q What was their complaint?

A

Q From which Israeli tribe did the chief priests come? (Deuteronomy 18:1)

A

Q From which tribe did Jesus come? (Hebrews 7:14)

A

Q What action did they determine to take as a result?

A

When the chief priest saw the response of the people to Jesus, they

feared they would lose their position in society and their very jobs. They were not about to let this happen. The tribe of Levi had carried out the priestly duties for 1400 years. This Johnnie-come-lately from the tribe of Judah was not about to end their reign. So they plotted to have Jesus killed. Looking at Christ's death through these religious leaders, you could conclude that job security killed Jesus. Little did they know that regardless of their effort to preserve their jobs, God had already appointed Jesus as high priest, one not in the order of Aaron, but in the order of Melchizedek.

Jesus and Melchizedek

"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." Hebrews 7:1-3

In the New Testament, references to Melchizedek appear only in the Letter to the Hebrews (later 1st century AD), though these are extensive (*Hebrews* 5: 6, 10; 6: 20; 7: 1,

10, 11, 15, 17, 21). Jesus Christ is there identified as *a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek* quoting from Ps. 110:4. As such, Jesus assumes the role of High Priest once and for all. Abraham's transfer of goods to Melchizedek is seen to imply that Melchizedek is superior to Abraham, in that Abraham is tithing to him. Thus, Melchizedek's (Jesus') priesthood is superior to the Aaronic priesthood (who are descended from Abraham), and the Temple in Jerusalem is now unnecessary. Traditional Evangelical Christian denominations, following Luther, teach that Melchizedek was a historical figure and a very typical example of Christ. Tremper Longman (an Old Testament Biblical scholar) notes that a popular understanding of the relationship between Melchizedek and Jesus is that Melchizedek is an Old Testament appearance - in other words, that Melchizedek *is* Jesus.

Jesus, Our High Priest

"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.**23** Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; **24** but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood.**25** Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.**26** Such a high priest meets our need--one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.**27** Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.**28** For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever" **Hebrews 7:20-28.**

Verses 26-28 paints the perfect picture of why Jesus, as High Priest forever is better than all the other priests from the tribe of Levi because they died and were not able to finish the work of salvation. The following passages show what Jesus, our High Priest has accomplished for us.

"And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." **Hebrews 10:10**

"For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love⁵ he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will." **Ephesians 1:4-6**

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin." **1 John 1:7**

"And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." **1 Corinthians 6:11**

"And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, **7** in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus." **Ephesians 2:6-7**

"Because by the one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy (set apart)." **Hebrews 10:14**

"The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven,**2** and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man." **Hebrews 8:1-2**

This high priest is Christ Jesus who is sitting down at the right hand of the Father not because He is tired, but because the work of salvation has been completed. The Levites were not able to complete the work that's why they had to stand continuously when they performed their duties.

Practical Application

"Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.**15** For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin.**16** Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." **Hebrews 4:14-16**

- Q How should this truth affect our faith?
- Q In what way does Jesus identify with us?
- Q Does this comfort your heart?
- Q When you are facing temptation in your life, does Jesus know what you are facing?
- Q Does He know the way out for you?

Q Are you willing to turn to Him in your time of need?.

It necessary that Jesus replace the Levitical priesthood by becoming our High Priest. In order for us to be save completely He had to replace their inperfection with His perfection. There was also something imperfect about the sacrifice the Levitical priesthood offered. The next lesson explores the need for a better sacrifice, and how Jesus was that sacrifice.

It is no secret, what God can do. What He's done for others, He'll do for you.

Our mission is to help people find strength and security on the foundation that can never be shaken, cracked or shattered. This foundation is the remarkable truth of God's unconditional love and His indisputable grace experienced in a relationship with Jesus Christ. The critics of Christianity have launched a full attack to discredit the person and works of Jesus Christ and the reliability of His word. We cannot be silent anymore. Let us as children of light, stand firm in the faith, because He who has taken us this far will never forsake us. You are called Christians, be careful of that name. Let not our Lord Jesus Christ be blasphemed on your account

Believe this, "Jesus did not come to make bad people good, He came to make dead people live."

Keep It Simple

Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.

If you have any questions, comments or you know anybody else who will benefit from this study please feel free to give us their email address and they will be added to our mailing list to receive weekly lessons. The email address is santigiemando1@yahoo.com,

Remember: A candle loses nothing by lighting another candle (Ephesians 5:8)

Let's go light another candle!

