

## HEBREWS CHAPTER SEVEN

In my early adulthood I had a cavity in a molar. That tooth got its first filling. Years later that filling wore out and had to be replaced with a larger filling. More years after that, even that filling wasn't sufficient. But there was not enough tooth left for another fix. It required a crown.

If you have a crown, you know the process. The dentist removed (just a nice word for "drilled") the old filling and prepped the tooth for the crown. He made an impression of the tooth – what was left of it anyway – and made a temporary crown from materials he had in his office. The temporary crown was strictly a stop-gap measure until the permanent crown was ready. The permanent crown was not like the temporary one. It was made in another place and of different materials. Both the filling and the temporary crown were weak. Their protection did not last.

I even had trouble keeping the temporary crown on my tooth temporarily. I swallowed two in three days. They simply wouldn't stay on my tooth. Three temporary crowns were required to get me through until the permanent one was ready. I have never been more excited to go to the dentist! I haven't had any more trouble since he covered my poor, weak tooth with the permanent crown.

The purpose of this silly analogy is to highlight the difference between temporary and permanent. "Temporary" cannot fully do the job. "Temporary" has to be repeated over and over. "Temporary" is insufficient. The Levitical priesthood was temporary. Its priests were imperfect. Its sacrifices were insufficient. But Jesus' priesthood is permanent. This week we will dig deeper into what makes Jesus such a superior High Priest.

### **Abraham meets Melchizedek**

In chapter six, the author took a brief detour from the topic of Jesus' high priesthood to warn his audience about spiritual immaturity. After exhorting his hearers to push on to maturity, he returns to the subject of the priesthood of Christ in chapter seven.

### **Read Hebrews 7:1-10**

The author introduced us to Melchizedek in chapter five. In that week's study, we read the original account about Melchizedek and Abraham (then "Abram") from Genesis 14. Here are some of the things we learned about Melchizedek from Genesis:

- He was king of Salem
- He was a priest of God Most High
- He blessed Abram
- He worshipped the one true God, Creator of heaven and earth

- Abram gave him a tenth of the plunder

***What additional facts do we learn about Melchizedek in Hebrews 7:1-10?***

***Check all the reasons below that make Jesus' priesthood "in the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 5:6).***

\_\_\_ ***Jesus is both a priest and a king***

\_\_\_ ***Jesus' priesthood is eternal***

\_\_\_ ***Jesus is greater than Abraham***

\_\_\_ ***Jesus is without beginning or end of days***

\_\_\_ ***Jesus ministry brings both peace and righteousness***

\_\_\_ ***Jesus was not a descendant of Levi***

Melchizedek is a bit of a mystery. We don't know anything about his genealogy or his life other than this brief encounter with Abraham. The author capitalizes on this lack of information to use Melchizedek as a picture or "type" for the priesthood of Christ. Melchizedek was an actual historical figure, but since Scripture is silent on his parents and his birth and death, he "remains a priest forever."

Abraham gave a tenth of the plunder or a "tithe" to Melchizedek. Since the "lesser" tithes to the "greater," the author uses this to show the superiority of Melchizedek's priestly order over the Levitical priesthood. Although Levi and his descendents had not yet been born, Levi also "tithed" to Melchizedek since he was "still in the body of his ancestor" Abram.

Therefore, the priesthood of Jesus – like Melchizedek's – is superior to the Levitical priesthood. In the next section of the chapter, the author further emphasizes the eternal nature of Jesus' priesthood. But before we move ahead, let's take a quick look back at the Levitical priesthood and the tithe.

**Read Numbers 3:1-13 and 18:1-7**

***God set apart a "tithe" from among His people to do His work on their behalf. Who were these intercessors for the nation of Israel?***

*What were the responsibilities and duties of Aaron and his sons? Of the Levites?*

*Remember, God's presence resided in the tabernacle. Who was allowed to be near God? What would happen to anyone else that came near?*

*Read Leviticus 27:30-33. What did God command every Israelite to do? Check all that apply.*

*To give a tithe of everything they harvest.*

*To tithe from their herds and flocks.*

*Not to try to keep the best and give God the inferior.*

*Read Deuteronomy 26:12 and Numbers 18:21-25, what is the purpose for the tithe?*

*Read Numbers 18:26. Were the Levites exempt from the tithe? Yes No*

### **A Permanent Priesthood**

**Read Hebrews 7:11-22**

What was the last significant thing you had to replace? Maybe it was a washing machine or a refrigerator. Perhaps it was a car. These items and things like them are useful. They fill necessary roles in today's life. But they don't last forever. They wear out. They break down. And sometimes we replace them because new models come along that meet our needs even better.

Mosaic Law dictated that only descendants of the tribe of Levi could be priest. But in verse 12, the author states that a change in the law had to come with this new priesthood. Why? Jesus was of the tribe of Judah. The new priesthood is not based on ancestry. The Levitical priesthood and the Old Covenant were “weak and useless.” Something better had come along!

***Based on the passages you read above from the Old Testament, summarize the purpose of the Levitical priesthood?***

***Why did God replace the Levitical priesthood? Did it fail? Read Galatians 3:19-25 to help you with your answer.***

The word “perfection” in Hebrews 7:11 is translated from the Greek word “teleiosis.” It doesn’t mean that something is “without flaws,” but rather carries the idea of “reaching a goal” or “arriving at a desired end.” The Levitical priesthood and the Old Covenant could not completely fulfill God’s ultimate goal.

This does not mean that the old priesthood and covenant were “bad,” merely temporary. God instituted both to point to and anticipate His ultimate plan for eternal redemption. We see a **progression** between the old and the new priesthood. God did not start over. He merely brought His goal to completion through His Son. And Jesus is a priest of a new order, not the old.

***On what basis is Jesus appointed our priest? (Look back at verses 16-22.)***

The superior nature of Jesus’ priesthood also gives us a “better hope” or a “better covenant” through which we are able to draw near to God. (We will look more in the next chapter at the difference between the old covenant and the new.)

***Many religions claim they have a “new revelation” or new way to God. Based on verses 20-22, how can we be sure that God has not and will not provide another intercessor?***

*What should this assurance mean to our life?*

**Read Hebrews 7:23-28**

*List all the characteristics you can find that describe the superior nature of Jesus' priesthood over the Levitical priesthood.*

### **Application**

The author of Hebrews effectively and appropriately studied and used the Old Testament to better understand the last revelation of God, which came through Christ. First century Christians saw God's plan for redemption through Christ in the Old Testament Scriptures. Christians today would benefit greatly to follow the example of the author of Hebrews. We cannot completely understand the New Testament or get the complete picture of God's revelation to mankind without the Old Testament.

*Consider your own perspective on the Old Testament. What part does it play in your thoughts about the Christian life? What role does it play in your own Bible Study?*

*How do the superior characteristics of Jesus' priesthood impact us as believers?*

*God established the Levitical priesthood as a picture of the true eternal priest, Jesus. Picture Jesus now, your High Priest. In what ways can you imagine Him interceding with the Father now on your behalf?*