



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.

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.*

Do you have any idea what great event is scheduled for this coming Tuesday? On September 21st, Al Gore Al Gore hinted that the iPhone 5 is due to be released soon. Then on this past



Tuesday, Apple confirmed the rumor that October 4th is the official release date for the iPhone 5. Then yesterday, Al Gore had another announcement. Did you happen to catch this on the news? He held a press conference and told the world, “When Steve Jobs first had the idea for an iPhone, he wanted it to be this big. So I said to him, ‘Steve, buddie, no one will buy such a huge phone. I suggested he make it so that it would fit in the palm of your hand. So in reality, I invented the iPhone.’” ☺

Do you know why it will be called iPhone 5? That’s seems like a silly question, right? It’s called an iPhone 5 because it comes after the iPhone 4. But that’s my point—what was wrong with the iPhone 4? What was wrong with the models three, two and one? What’s wrong with them is that they are not quite as slick and snazzy as generation five will be. Eventually the exciting and new iPhone 5 will be featured on the Antiques Road Show. It will be a technological dinosaur; a relic; an overpriced paper weight. The reason for this is because Steve Jobs has built planned obsolescence into the iPhone. He knows full well that successive generations of this popular gadget will replace the current ones. And it seems to work as stock prices of Apple recently reached an all-time high.

In a similar way, the Old Testament sacrificial system had planned obsolescence built into it. Now I have to be very careful here because the planned obsolescence of an iPhone and God’s perfect plan of redemption are hardly one and the same, but I want us to understand that even though the system of animal sacrifices to atone for sins is detailed and described throughout the majority of the Old Testament and despite the fact that the sacrificial system was part of God’s perfect plan to redeem mankind, God planned for all of it to become obsolete. It was never intended to last forever because something much greater was coming.

Verse eleven introduces this idea of planned obsolescence. *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?* This one verse assumes that the reader has a good grasp of the Old Testament. It assumes you understand the priesthood of Aaron and the priesthood of Melchizedek. I am going to make similar assumptions this morning but I should do a bit of review so we are all tracking together.

The priesthood of Aaron was instituted by God through Moses’ brother, Aaron. Moses served as God’s prophet and Aaron was to become God’s chief priest. Aaron and Moses were part of the

tribe of Levi which is why Aaron's priesthood is often called the Levitical priesthood. As I mentioned last week, Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement, is this coming Saturday, October 8th. This was the one day of the year when Aaron would enter into the Most Holy Place, behind the curtain and offer sacrifices to atone for the sins of every man, woman and child in Israel. If he failed to perform the instructions exactly as God laid them out, Aaron would be put to death, just as his two sons were killed for failing to honor the Lord in their priestly service. Everything was to be done with exacting precision according to God's instructions. Aaron was to offer two goats to cover the sins of the people but before he could do that, since he himself needed atonement for sin, he had to sacrifice a bull and offer its blood to cover his own sins.

Of course the priesthood of Aaron contained a whole lot more than just this one day of sacrifice but Yom Kippur was the chief of the sacrificial days and by far the most important. All of this was absolutely necessary for sins to be forgiven. Ever since Adam and Eve's decision to become rulers of their own destiny, mankind has had an enormous sin problem. What men and women most need is to be in a right relationship with God. People needed a right relationship with God more than they a husband or a wife. They needed a right relationship with God more than they needed land, flocks and herds. They needed a right relationship with God more than they needed silver and gold, more than protection from their enemies and even more that they needed food, shelter and clothing.

This is the one truth that is lost on all unbelievers and that even Christians tend to forget. Watch this [brief clip](#) from the new documentary, [180 movie](#). Each person in this clip firmly believes that they are a "good person" and therefore deserve entrance into Heaven. They do not realize that their greatest need is to have a right relationship with God. Aaron did understand this vital need but he also knew that on his own, he could not have a right relationship with God. God dwelt behind the curtain in the Tabernacle that he had prescribed be built to exact precision. The Lord Almighty was seated on the atonement cover of the ark and not even Aaron could enter except on the one day of the year.

Unlike the folks in this video clip—who are a nothing more than a segment of our society—Aaron and many of the Israelites knew they needed a right relationship with God. But they also know they way to God was blocked and forbidden except through the high priest on the Day of Atonement. This highlights incredible responsibility of the high priest. Most of us cannot even begin to relate to burning need for a high priest to serve as a mediator between us and God. If you have experience in the Catholic church you may be a little closer to understanding, but even then I don't think it's even close to the same experience.

But as verse eleven tells us, the perfection that we need was not possible through the Levitical priesthood. Instead we need a priest in the order of Melchizedek. The name of Melchizedek appears once in Genesis 14:8, once in Psalm 110:4 and eight times in Hebrews, which looks back on Genesis 14 and Psalm 110. I am not going to go into detail about the precise identity of Melchizedek. I did that when I preached on Genesis 14. Some of you believe that Melchizedek was an Old Testament appearance of Jesus and others, like myself, think he was just a man. Genesis tells us that he was King of Salem. He was an actual king that the Lord set apart for special service. But what is most important for us to understand is the distinction between the priesthood of Aaron and the priesthood of Melchizedek.

This chart summarizes verses 11-28 of this chapter.

verses	Priesthood of Aaron	Priesthood of Melchizedek
11	imperfect	perfect
14	Tribe of Levi	Tribe of Judah
16	Basis of ancestry	Basis of the power of an indestructible life
20-21	No oath	Established by an oath
18,22	Weak and useless	Better hope/ better covenant
23-24	Temporary—high priest dies	Permanent—high priest is eternal
25	Saves temporarily (<i>implied</i>)	Saves completely/ always lives to intercede
26	high priest is sinful—needs to atone first for his own sins	<i>holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens</i>
27	Sacrifice for sins day after day	Sacrificed for sins once for all
28	Men who are weak	One who is perfect forever

The priesthood of Aaron was prescribed for atonement of sins but it was an imperfect solution. By imperfect it does not at all mean sinful or wrong. When you and I say, “Well I know I’m not perfect,” what we really mean is that I am a sinner, I make mistakes, I don’t always do the right thing, etc. But when the Bible says that the Aaronic priesthood was not perfect it means that it was not complete. It was not the final solution. By implication then, the priesthood of Melchizedek did bring perfection, and we’ll see why in a moment.

Aaron and his descendants were from the tribe of Levi. Only Levites could be priests. If you recall, the Levites were the only tribe that did not get an inheritance in the Promised Land. As Joshua decided the portion of land that each tribe would receive, he added, *The Levites, however, do not get a portion among you, because the priestly service of the LORD is their inheritance* (Joshua 18:7). There’s an application in that one verse. Levites, you don’t need a lot of land and flocks and herds, you don’t need all of that stuff because the Lord is your inheritance. This reminds me of my favorite line from my current favorite worship song—By Faith.

We will stand as children of the promise
We will fix our eyes on Him our soul's reward

Jesus is our reward. Jesus is our inheritance and the Levites got an early taste of this truth. Aaron was from the ancestry of Levi but Jesus is from the line of Judah and the author rightly said, *in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests*. This begins to show why Jesus is the great high priest. As you read your Old Testament history we see many priests in the ancestry of Levi who were good, faithful priests but also many others who were wicked and faithless but all of them—good or bad—received their status as priests simply by virtue of what family they were born into. But Jesus became our high priest *by the power of an indestructible life*.

The Levitical priesthood was no established by an oath by Jesus’ priesthood was sealed with an oath. “*The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: ‘You are a priest forever.’*” The priesthood of Aaron was “weak and useless” but Jesus’ priesthood brings a better hope and a better covenant. Aaron’s priesthood was temporary because each successive priest would

eventually die but Jesus is a priest forever therefore his priesthood is permanent. Furthermore, Jesus' priestly service brings complete salvation *because he always lives to intercede for us*.

This means that Jesus, our high priest, never stops praying for us. In one sense, that is a rather interesting thought. Why would Jesus pray for us? After all, he is God. He is the one who answers prayer so why would he be doing the actual praying? Knowing about the earthly ministry of Jesus helps us understand this idea of Jesus praying for us.

Why did Jesus pray while he was on the earth? The easiest way to explain this is to understand what prayer is? Prayer is an intimate form of communication, therefore, through his prayers, Jesus continued the intimate relationship he had with his Father from eternity past. As a man, Jesus was not omnipresent. He was not with his Father in the way that he is right now so his prayer was his line of communication and his method of being in his Father's presence.

But doesn't prayer always move from the lesser to the greater? In other words, you and I pray to God, but we don't pray to one another. Several years ago Kellyn was anxious to eat her dinner so instead of waiting on a family prayer, she asked, "Can I go ahead and pray to myself?" We all stopped and said, "Well actually, Kellyn, praying *to* yourself is forbidden by the first commandment—You shall have no other Gods before me. What I think you meant to say was, 'Can I pray *by* myself?' Isn't that right, dear?" We don't pray to one another or to a cow or a wooden idol—we pray to God—and we pray to God because he is our Creator and sustainer. We pray to him because we are wholly dependent on him for our life and breath. But is Jesus dependent on the Father? He is not dependent on him like we are, however, while teaching his disciple he the following:

- I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love (John 15:10).
- I always do what pleases him (John 8:39).

Jesus is fully God in every possible way but he also exists in a voluntary submission to his Father. In speaking of the Holy Spirit he said, *I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever* (John 14:6). He made and still makes requests of his Father and this passage reminds us that he continues to do that for us. We have all gone through a difficult time in life but some of those have been made more bearable when you have known that your fellow brothers and sisters have lifted you up in prayer. Haven't you experienced a time when you knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that the prayers of the saints were helping to sustain you? Isn't that a marvelous feeling? How much more when we know that our high priest always lives to intercede for us? He is continually before the throne of his Father interceding on our behalf?

But what exactly does he ask for on our behalf? Once again, his earthly ministry fills in the missing details. In what is often called Jesus' High Priestly Prayer in John 17, we see the following prayers on our behalf.

- protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one (11).

Our high priest is praying for our unity as believers. When we fight and quarrel it not only is a bad witness to the watching world but it breaks the heart of God and is in direct opposition to Jesus' prayers.

- so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them (13).

Have you ever met someone who had the full measure of Christ's joy? We may not all have joy in full measure but the Lord Jesus continues to intercede on our behalf. He continues to ask the Father to help us find this joy; that all other things would fade away in comparison. It's not that we cannot have joy in other things but that joy in these other things is an overflow from our joy in Christ.

- protect them from the evil one (15)

Why do zoos have fences? Every once in a while you hear a story about someone who fell into an ape enclosure but have you ever heard of anyone jumping into the crocodile enclosure? Have you ever read a story about a man hopping the fence so he could be with the lions? Of course not. However, we know that we live every day in the lion's den, don't we? This is because the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour.

- Sanctify them by the truth (17)

Sanctification is the spiritual growth that takes place from the moment of our conversion to the moment of our death. We all progress at different rates and achieve different levels of sanctification, but Jesus is praying for each one of us.

- May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me (23).

There it is again—Jesus praying for our unity.

Let me add one more of Jesus' prayers from 1 John.

- But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One (1 John 2:1).

What does Jesus say to the Father when we sin? He "reminds" the Father that he absorbed the Father's wrath on our account. He tells his Father that we have a genuine faith. He rejoices in the fact we are covered with his righteousness. Jesus says, "This one is mine. He belongs to us. No one can snatch her out of my hand."

This is exactly what Paul taught about Jesus' intercession in Romans 8.

If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us (Romans 8:31-34)

This is one of the most beloved passages in all the Bible. If we are covered with the righteousness of Christ, no one can bring a charge against us. If God justifies us then no one can condemn us. By the way, this is one of the most powerful weapons we have to defeat the prowling, hungry lion—the devil. When you feel condemnation, pray your way through passages

like these. And whatever you do, don't talk to the devil. I have heard people and even many preachers say, "You can't touch me devil. I'm covered by the blood of Jesus. Get out of here Satan!" Don't talk to the devil—that's just silly nonsense. Pray to your Father in heaven who graciously gives us all things. Thank the Father for sending the Son to justify us. Give thanks to the Father for Jesus, our Great High Priest, who is at his right hand interceding for us.

But what then was the purpose of the Aaronic priesthood if it was meant to be replaced by the priesthood in the order of Melchizedek? Why was there 1400 years of animal sacrifices and attention to detail if all of it was going to be superceded by Jesus? Was all of it some cruel joke, not much better than Apple's plan to make their iphones obsolete?

Let me close with one answer to this question and I will give more answers in the coming weeks. The first answer comes in verse 26. *Such a high priest meets our need...* Now if you stop right there we are left with a statement about our needs. This phrase makes me think of my felt needs. Did I get enough sleep last night? No, because I stayed up to watch the Badger game. Did I get enough to eat? Yes, but my stomach is starting to growl, now that you mention it. Am I ill? No, but flu season is just around the corner. These are our felt needs. We could add more questions about the health of our marriages, how much we enjoy our jobs, etc.

But notice how this verse concludes. *Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.* As High Priest, Jesus does meet our truest need—the need for a perfect Savior. The priesthood of Aaron was temporary and useless compared to the priesthood of Christ. Moreover, not only does he meet our true need as a perfect, sinless atonement for our sins, Jesus also meets our felt needs. I don't mean that if you follow Jesus you will never get sick and will always be prosperous. What I mean is that our longing for felt needs is most often a longing for something more. Speaking of eating, why do we often eat too much? Because we are trying to fill a hole in our souls so we stuff food into the hole Why do we watch inappropriate thing son TV or surf the web in place we have no business looking? Because we are looking for something real, something to make us feel alive inside. But none of these other things can ever satisfy. This is the definition of an addiction—trying to meet our felt needs while ignoring our true need. I am not suggesting that we do don't need to eat or sleep, but our true need is for a perfect high priest. *One who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.* Only he can satisfy.

Rich Maurer
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