

**LESSON THIRTEEN
HEBREWS 7:11-19**

DAY ONE

Read Hebrews 7:11-16

1. What do you think “perfection” means in Heb. 7:11?
2. Does perfection come through the priesthood or the law? Why or why not?

Read Heb. 7:11 and 7:19.

3. According to these verses, what things are considered imperfect?

Read Heb. 2:10, 5:9-10, and 10:14.

4. According to these verses, who is considered to be perfect?

Read Heb. 12:2.

5. According to this verse, what is involved in the process of being perfected?
6. According to Heb. 7:12, what two systems of Israelite worship are changed?

DAY TWO

Read Hebrews 7:13

7. Who is the one of whom “these things” are spoken?

8. From what tribe does Jesus descend?

Read 1 Chronicles 28:4.

9. What is significant about the tribe to which this other priest belongs?

Read Numbers 18:6-7.

10. What privilege is given to the Levites? Was anyone else allowed to officiate at the altar?

Read Heb. 7:14.

11. What is the point of this verse?

DAY THREE

Read Heb. 7:15-16.

12. What physical requirement was lacking in Christ?

13. What did he offer as his ultimate credential instead?

14. What is the importance of the “indestructible life” in this argument?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:17.

15. How important is Christ’s resurrection (His indestructible life)?

DAY FOUR

Read Heb. 7:17.

16. The author refers to Psalm 110:4 for a third time in this passage. How does the quotation in Heb. 7:17 differ from what is quoted in 7:11 and 7:15?

17. What point do you think the author is trying to underscore?

Read Heb. 7:18-19.

18. How is the law described? Is this surprising to you?

Read Romans 3:20, Gal. 3:21, and Gal. 3:24-26.

19. How is the law described in these verses?

DAY FIVE

Read 1 Corinthians 13:9-13.

20. In this passage in Hebrews, what is the “partial” and what is the “perfect”?

21. How is the better hope described?

22. What is the benefit of the better hope?

23. How does this hope enable you to draw near to God?

24. How does your heart respond to the fact that we are liberated from the law in Christ? Do you feel like you live a life that is characterized by this better hope? Do you feel the freedom to draw near to God? Why or why not?

LESSON THIRTEEN SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 7:11-19 ¹¹ Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need *was there* for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron? ¹² For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also. ¹³ For the one concerning whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar. ¹⁴ For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests. ¹⁵ And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, ¹⁶ who has become *such* not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life. ¹⁷ For it is attested of *Him*, "YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK." ¹⁸ For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness ¹⁹ (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

DAY ONE

Hebrews 7:19 ⁹ (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

Hebrews 2:10 ¹⁰ For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.

Hebrews 5:9-10 ⁹ And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, ¹⁰ being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 10:14 ¹⁴ For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

Hebrews 12:2 ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

DAY TWO

1 Chronicles 28:4 ⁴ "Yet, the LORD, the God of Israel, chose me [King David] from all the house of my father to be king over Israel forever. For He has chosen Judah to be a leader; and in the house of Judah, my father's house, and among the sons of my father He took pleasure in me to make *me* king over all Israel.

Numbers 18:6-7 ⁶ "Behold, I Myself have taken your fellow Levites from among the sons of Israel; they are a gift to you, dedicated to the LORD, to perform the service for the tent of meeting. ⁷ "But you and your sons with you shall attend to your priesthood for everything concerning the altar and inside the veil, and you are to perform service. I am giving you the priesthood as a bestowed service, but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death."

DAY THREE

1 Corinthians 15:17 ¹⁷ and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.

DAY FOUR

Romans 3:20 ²⁰ because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

Galatians 3:21 Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.

Galatians 3:24-26 ²⁴ Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. ²⁶ For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

DAY FIVE

1 Corinthians 13:9-13 ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part; ¹⁰ but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. ¹¹ When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. ¹² For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. ¹³ But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.

LESSON THIRTEEN COMMENTARY HEBREWS 7:11-19

Heb. 7:11-19 is delineated as a distinct section by the word “perfection” in v. 11 and “perfect” in v. 19. Within this section, there are two main divisions in the passage. The first division is Heb. 7:11-16, which is marked by the recurrence of the two phrases “for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek,” (7:11 and 7:15). A more direct quote of this phrase will occur again in v. 17, suggesting to us that the primary consideration of our author is to set forth the way in which this “other” priest differs from that of the tribe of Aaron. The two differences expounded upon in this passage are that Christ is from another tribe/another order and that His priesthood has not terminated because He still lives. As long as He lives, which will be forever, He will occupy the role of High Priest. The second section is 7:17-20. Following a presentation of Jesus’ qualifications, Heb. 7:17-20 discusses the implications of what it means for Jesus to be high priest. The negative implication is that the priesthood and the law are set aside. The positive implication is that through the complete and perfect sacrifice made on our behalf, the believer is now able to draw near to God without ceremony and without fear, but in bold confidence that God the Father will respond to the depth of our need.

Hebrews 7:11-16

Heb. 7:1-10 focuses on Gen. 14:18-20 and the background story of Abraham meeting Melchizedek. It is primarily concerned with the character Melchizedek. The remainder of Chapter Seven now shifts to emphasize the importance of Psalm 110:4 as it applies an even greater significance to similarities between the priesthood of Melchizedek and the priesthood of Christ. Each word of Psalm 110:4 will be explored as it relates to Christ and his eternal priesthood. In this discussion, three points will be made: 1) that perfection does not come through the Levitical priesthood, 2) there is another priest of the order of Melchizedek who would bring perfection, and 3) it was intended prior to the existence of the priesthood, that another would come who would be a priest from a different line. These three points are made firm by the ultimate qualification of Jesus’ indestructible life. No Levitical priest could ever make that claim.

The first phrase in Psalm 110:4 that the author expounds is “according to the order of Melchizedek.” This phrase is introduced however with the statement in 7:11, “Now if perfection was through the priesthood, what need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek?” The first concept related to Christ’s priesthood then is that of perfection. From the inception of the priesthood to its conclusion at the destruction of the Temple, 83 high priests were in service.¹ What was Jesus able to offer that these 83 priests could not? Perfection. We read in Heb. 5:9 that having been made perfect, Christ became the source of eternal salvation. Now we learn more about what that means.

¹ William L. Lane, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 47a, *Hebrews: 1-8*, 188.

Perfection is an important concept in the book of Hebrews. In the greater passage of Heb. 7:11-28, perfection is the opening thought, the closing thought, and it appears once in the middle. The first two occurrences of the word “perfect” define it in a negative sense. The focus is on that which cannot bring perfection: the sacrificial system of the Levitical priesthood and the law. Heb. 7:28 presents the idea of perfection positively when it describes Christ as the one who is made perfect. The argument is set forth that the priesthood and the law, systems set in place in order to draw men and women to God, are incomplete. With the appearance of Christ in history, the only one who was able to fulfill the perfection required of the old system, and the only one who is able to offer perfection to those who trust in Him, has brought to fulfillment everything anticipated in the Old Testament. What does perfection mean then? It means to be mature, complete, that something is accomplished or brought to its intended end. The intended goal of the continual sacrifices was to restore a broken relationship between mankind and God. The problem with the sacrificial system though was that the sacrifice was only valid until a person sinned again, then there was a need for another sacrifice. The realized goal of Christ’s sacrifice is permanent, unhindered access to God the Father through the Son, the eternal high priest.

What the author of Hebrews seeks to explain is that this is what God desires for us, but it was impossible to attain under the sacrifices of the priests and the ordinances of the law. The author meant for his audience to understand that God instituted these practices not because he wanted to set an imperfect system in place, but because he wanted to train the hearts and minds of the Israelites to understand the importance of a sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins. When Christ then came and provided the ultimate sacrifice, it should have been easy for them to recognize the incredible significance of this offering because God had prepared the way. There were many in the congregation who did grasp this amazing thought and allowed its truth to transform their relationship to the Temple system, but there were some who did not comprehend the magnitude of what Christ did and they were returning to the very system that failed them in the first place.

In 7:11, the author asks the question, “if perfection was attainable through the Levitical system, why then would there be a need for Jesus and why would it be necessary for Him to arise from a different order (and the point is made clear that it is not the order of Aaron)? The question is rhetorical in nature because the answer is clear: Jesus is not from the tribe of Aaron and He did show up in history in order to offer himself on the cross, therefore perfection could not be attained through the law or through the sacrificial system. It is important to note the nuance brought out in Heb. 7:11, that the law is affiliated with the priesthood. The implications of this association are made clear in 7:13, but at this point the role of the law and the role of the priesthood are really negative examples, but simply systems that are no longer necessary because when the one who is perfect has come and the partial is done away (1 Cor. 13:9).

In 7:12 the author makes the almost unbelievable statement, something implicit in his argument to this point but now he makes evident, that when there is a change in the priesthood, there necessarily is a change of law. This statement would be beyond

shocking for first century Jews to comprehend. The law was such a central part of their system of worship. It was the means to approaching God, but when we look between the lines, as the author does with his reference to Ps. 110:4, we see the way in which God prepared the hearts of the Jews and the hearts of his readers to hear these amazing truths. God determined prior to the law that another would come who belonged to an eternal priestly order and He would bring about the fulfillment of His promises. In order for the promises to be fulfilled, there would need to be a change in the law. So what is this change of law to which our author refers? Does it mean that everything good and holy contained in the law is no longer necessary? Does it mean that we no longer need the Old Testament? The numerous citations from the Old Testament in this letter, makes the latter question moot. But the point made in this particular verse is that the portion of the law that laid out the priestly requirements concerning lineage was no longer in effect. Here the author concentrates his attention on the law as it concerns the tribe of Aaron. If Jesus is a superior priest like Melchizedek, as has been proven, then by virtue of his lineage the requirements of Aaronic descent are no longer in effect because there will never be a need for another high priest. The Aaronic priests are dead and the temple is destroyed, but Jesus lives forever in his intercessory role.

Heb. 7:13-14 focuses on Jesus' ability to make perfect what the Levitical priests could never make perfect. The point is reasserted that Jesus did not descend from the tribe of Aaron and so has no legal claim to the priesthood. Instead, Jesus descended from the tribe of Judah. With this distinction, two points are made. The first is again that Jesus does not follow the prescribed order of succession to the role of high priest (although His occupancy in this role is not illegitimate, it has precedence in that He comes through a different order that was proven to be superior in the first part of Chapter Seven). The second point is that Jesus is descended from Judah, which was the line through whom the King and Messiah would come. The author says nothing more about this, but the term "Judah" would have been pregnant with meaning for his readers. They were waiting for one who would descend from David and reestablish his throne. Jesus did so, but in a way that was unexpected. The point is that not only does Jesus have a claim to the role of high priest He also transcends this in his role as King and Ruler. He has the authority and the power that is ultimately established by his indestructible life in 7:16. It is immensely important that the issue of Jesus' sacrifice be crystal clear. If he had come from the tribe of Levi, there would likely be a good deal of confusion regarding what the cross really meant. The book of Hebrews is evident that Jesus is the sinless high priest who had no need of presenting a sacrifice of His own behalf, but whose purpose was to present an acceptable sacrifice that would atone for all those who would come to faith in Him. Instead, Jesus' link to Melchizedek validates His priestly ministry and distinctly separates Him both from the priests who had their own struggles with sin and from a system that was ineffective in achieving reconciliation with God.

The author puts a dramatic end to his argument regarding Christ's qualifications. The numerous comparisons to Melchizedek's priesthood have already been made, but now the incomparable act of overcoming death, rising from the dead, and being seated

at the right hand of the Majesty on High stands forth as the incontestable proof that Jesus has the right, the power, and the authority to assume His role as high priest. The word “indestructible” occurs only here in the New Testament, as the only adjective appropriate to describe the victorious way in which Christ triumphed over death. Every high priest in the line of Aaron served his term and died, only to be succeeded by another. No high priest in the history of Israel could make the claim of an indestructible life. Because of this, the whole Levitical priesthood is seen as incapable in bringing about the eternal salvation and perfection that Christ has to offer.

Hebrews 7:17-19

In Heb. 17-19, the focus of the passage shifts from Christ’s qualifications to the practical implications of His role as high priest. Heb. 7:17 says that “it is attested of Him,” meaning that God the Father serves as Jesus’ witness. In Acts 2:2 it says that Jesus is attested (or declared) to Israel by God with miracles and wonders and signs. In Hebrews, God stands witness on behalf of His Son not only to Israel, but also to this audience and to all who would believe, with the ultimate sign of the resurrection. By virtue of Jesus’ triumph over death, He reigns forever as king and serves forever as high priest. In light of this truth, the author now revisits the theme of the law and its inability to perfect its followers. In Heb. 7:18, we read several things about the Law: it has been set aside, it is a former commandment, it is characterized by weakness and uselessness, and it made nothing perfect. These extremely negative descriptions point to the truth that the author previously stated in 7:12; that there is a change in the law. We will explore this concept in depth in later chapters, but in this context, the author is trying to make it clear to his readers that now that Jesus has come, the partial or incomplete systems (the law, the priesthood, the covenants) have been done away. They have all fulfilled their purpose, which was to point the Israelites of the Old Testament, the author’s audience, and us as well to our intended Savior. The sacrifices of the priesthood were unable to make a person perfect. The law and the sacrificial system are ineffective in that they were not able, nor were they ever intended to grant permanent access to the throne of grace, to God the Father. They were only ever meant to awaken a sense of helplessness within that would leave us crying out for the only one who would be able to take care of the issue of sin and separation from the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The “better hope” offered by the Son is the anchor of the believer’s faith. The hope offered through the sacrifices was temporary. A person could attain forgiveness that was in effect until the next time they sinned. They were unable to live in a state of permanent rest with God. Not until Jesus met the requirements of the Law in His sacrifice was the promise of peace with God a permanent offer. The comparison between the law and the better hope is not one of degree. The author is not saying that the law is good but Christ’ sacrifice is better. What is being said is that they are qualitatively different. The law was of a quality that could not save humanity. It was designed to be temporary. It was designed to be a shadow. The law is like a temporary freeway overpass. It is designed to be provisional until the new structure is built. Once the new permanent structure is standing, the temporary structure is taken down. The

law is good because its job is to point to the ultimate need for Our Lord's sacrifice and drive us to trust in His all-sufficiency. We now have a different and better hope because the promises contained in the law have been met in Christ and we no longer have to continually present sacrifices in order to be forgiven. We stand in a permanent relationship of forgiveness with God the Father, and this relationship is shared with us through God the Son. And how is this hope defined? As that which draws us near to God. The point is that until now there was a necessary system that stood in the way between man and God. Now that system is no longer necessary, and the believer can confidently trust that the Father is available to them, He cares for them, and His desire is to bring His children into a mature relationship of unfettered trust regardless of the circumstances of life. The goal for all of us is to live with a sense that we have a Father in heaven who is on our side. The author will continue to explain the certainty of this promise in the final section of Chapter Seven.

So the author of Hebrews begins his argument by defining what the priesthood was unable to do. It was unable to bring about perfection (completion/maturity) in the lives of those who abided by its rules. The implication of this is that God instituted the Levitical priesthood and a system of sacrifice that was temporary. The goal of the sacrificial system was to point out a person's need for atonement, it was to temporarily place a person in right standing with God, but it was never meant to permanently deal with the issue of sin. As a result, those who abided by this system of worship would become keenly aware that they needed a Savior. Paul writes in Romans 3:20 that through the law comes the knowledge of sin. In Galatians 3:21 he writes, if the law was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed be on the basis of the law. The author of Hebrews agrees with Paul in that the priesthood (that which was instituted at the command of the law and which was supposed to apply the demands of the law to the people of Israel) and the sacrificial system could do nothing better than point people to their real need for Christ, their need for a better priest and a better sacrifice. At this point in the letter, the concept of the law and the priesthood are linked, both are judged to be imperfect in obtaining perfection on behalf of those who were seeking God, but valuable in anticipating the one who would be able to make perfect all those who place their faith in the saving work of the cross.