

The High PRIESTS WE NEED

Hebrews 7

INTRODUCTION:

A group of ministers, laymen, and their wives were touring Rome. Their guide through the Vatican said proudly - There are many priests on duty here, 24 hours a day. In fact, he said, you can confess your sins in 72 different languages here.

A 70 year old Deacon from Harlingen, Texas, asked - what if an American Indian should come and want to confess his sins. Would there be someone who could understand him. Perplexed the guide thought for a minute, and then stammered, No, I do not know to whom he could confess his sins. The age-old Deacon said, I'll tell you what he would have to do. He would have to confess his sins to Jesus. Just like the Bible tells him to do.

Now the priesthood had its defects even at best in the Old Testament days. But under the New Testament we have a high priest who came forth after the order of Melchizedek and the priesthood of Christ.

The Jewish Christians were having their problems about leaving Judaism and trying half way to follow Christ but they wanted to go back to the things of the law.

Now the basic idea of the priest, the Latin word, pontifex - which means "a bridge builder." The priest was a man who functioned -- he built a bridge between men and God. He worked in the sacrificial system. A man broke the law, he broke fellowship with God, now the priest made the offering - the correct sacrifice and the fellowship was restored. That was the theory of the

whole matter.

First we ask the question - where did he get the idea of Melchizedek.

Well, it came from the Old Testament.

~~First~~, Psalm 110:4 - The Lord had sworn and will not repent. Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. ''

~~Second~~, ¹⁸⁻²⁰ Gen. 14:17-20 - Here is where the story originated. And the king of Sodom went out to meet Abraham after his return from the slaughter of Chederlaomer and the kings that were with him at the valley of Shaveh - which is the king's dale. And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth. And blessed be the most high God which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all,

Now from these two passages, the writer of Hebrews gets his picture of the priesthood, after the order of Melchizedek. But before we can really understand what he is saying, I think it would be well to look into the Jewish method of (interpreting Scripture) And the Rabbi's were skilled in this. They tell us that they followed at least two or three things.

~~First~~, the scholarly Jew - any passage of Scripture had four meanings to him. There were four different names or meanings that it had. First, there was Peshat - which is the (literal and factual meaning).

Second, there was Remaz which is the (suggested meaning).

~~Third~~, there was Derush which is the meaning (arrived at after a long and

careful ~~investigation.~~

~~Fourth~~, there is Sod which is the (Allegorical or the inner meaning)

Now it is the fact that to the Jew the most important meaning by far was the fourth, Sod. The (inner or mystical meaning). The Jew was not nearly so much interested in the literal, historical, factual meaning of the passage as he was the mystical part of it that he could extract.

Now second thing that the scholars attempted to do, they felt that they were justified to argue not only from the utterances but from the silences of the Scripture. They could take a Scripture and work on what it did not say in point of fact. He starts out and declares some things that the Scripture does not say about Melchizedek, as on this Scripture as to what it did say about him. There are many things that he had to say about him in his superiority and in his peculiar order or rank, in placing him above Aaron.

But first let us determine who Melchizedek was?

There have been some extravagant speculations. First, there have been those who said he was an angel. That he came up to mediate between the fallen angels but this cannot be true.

Second, they had said that he was the Holy Ghost which was sent, but there is no record on which the Holy Ghost is represented as a priest in the Scripture. There are others who contend that Melchizedek was the son of God himself. He was the one that Abraham had a vision of. That he was the one that appeared unto Abraham in a vision. But it is plain that he was not the son of God, nor an angel,

nor the Holy Ghost - for he was a man. He had a priestly office and he had authority. Now there are other people who have looked upon him as Enoch or Shem or Job.

There is one thing - he was different from the Levitical priest, V. 2. V. 1. For he was the king of Salem, to whom Abraham gave a tenth of his increase. He was a king as well as a priest. And it signifies that he was a righteous king. The king of peace. There was a dignity which would never belong to Aaron and the priesthood. Some of them were Prophets but none of them were kings.

V, 3 - Another thing that made him different from Aaron and the other priests, was his genealogy. But he was neither like them in that this verse declares that he was without father, without mother, without decent. Having neither beginning of days nor end of life. These extra ordinary terms surely were not intended to mean that he did not have neither father nor mother. And was not born and did not die as other men. The point is to prove that his priesthood was different from the Levitical. That is the very opposite. Theirs is shown - the tribe of Levi - that is the father was a priest. His mother was such a woman as the law required for a priest's wife. Ezra 2:61-63 and Lev. 21:13-15. It shows the day of his birth - the beginning of his days. But here is one without priestly descent. Nor his father's name, nor his mother's name. There is no entry of his birth or his death upon the records. So he draws from the silence of the Scriptures here that this is the very reverse of the habitual practice in Gen. - that there is a long list of the man's ancestors. But there is nothing like this from Melchizedek. And this reverses the rules of the priesthood because that depended upon descendants. Under the Jewish law a man could not under any circumstances become a priest unless he could produce an unbroken and certified pedigree going back to Aaron. If he had not that genealogy, nothing

in the world could make him a priest. His character, his ability had nothing to do with it. There was one essential and that was to be of that family. When the Jews came back from exile to Jeresalem, we find that certain priestly families could not produce their records and were therefore barred from the priesthood forever. Ezra 2:61-63. Neh. 7:63-65. On the other hand if a man could produce a pedigree coming back to Aaron, reaching that far - apart only from certain specified physical blemishes - nothing on earth could stop him from being a priest. Genealogy was literally everything. So then the first great difference between the ironic priesthood and the priesthood at the order of Melchizedek was that the ironic priesthood depended on genealogy. The priesthood of Melchizedek depended upon personal qualification. And that alone.

Melchizedek's priesthood was based on what he was and not what he had inherited.

We have stated that he was Salem means - king of Salem means peace - and therefore he was a king of peace. We have seen that he was without father and mother but now he draws again on the silence of the Scriptures and we are told that he began his priesthood and at no time - when he ended it. We are told of no time when he was born and no time when he died. Therefore, it is to be understood that he was without beginning or without ending. And that his priesthood was going to last forever and ever.

V. 4
Consider the greatness of Abraham. Now consider how great this man was. And yet Abraham gave tithes unto this priest. Now this is showing how that it is superior. Abraham being a great man brought his tithes unto this priest. Now you must understand this was long before the law ever came into existence.

The Jews were accustomed to looking upon Abraham probably as the greatest man that ever graced this earth. He was great in the exercise of his faith.

He was great because of the promises that had been made to center in him. He was great as the father of the most distinguished nation that ever lived. And there was another whom they held equal honor to his greatness, and his power. He was the father of the faithful and Jesus comes - the Messiah. The root of the true church, came out of Abraham.

Melchizedek was priest of the most high God. There was an official superiority to Abraham. Hence, he did not take of the spoils of war or the usual portion of what he possessed. And he offered it directly to God by his own hands. He brought them to a proper authorized minister.

When he talks about Abraham giving a tenth of the spoils, he goes back to the Old Testament - Gen. 12:1-14. In which Lot was taken captive by some kings at Sodom. And Abraham with his force of 318 trained men defeated the forces and captured much goods.

Now in V. 1 - when returning from the slaughter of the kings that Melchizedek blessed him. And in Gen. account, it tells about Melchizedek bringing forth bread and wine. Now Abraham needed substance after the battle and he brought bread and wine - the symbols of God's goodness and creation. Now to us today, this bread and wine cannot do other than remind us that the body was bruised for us and the blood that was shed on our behalf, and peace was made by the blood of his cross. Col. 1:20.

And Melchizedek blessed Abraham.

And a tenth is a tithe to the royal priest - Abraham presented this tithe as his offering to God. Through God's representative - the tithe preceded the giving of the law at Sinai. Evidently from time and memorial - the tithe was understood to belong to God. Gen. 28:22.

Now I think really if a Christian is conscientious he'll have a difficult job trying to prove that the Bible does not teach tithing. And that this was not here long before the New Testament.

Now this very act vouched for the greatness of Melchizedek. Why? Because Abraham was to be the father of the Levitical priesthood. The Israelite in priesthood - was to be confined to the tribe of Levi. But he was to serve his brothers. He was one of the sons of Jacob, that is Israel.

In V. 5 - when the sons of Levi received tithes - they took tithes from their brothers. That is one tribe gave a tenth to another tribe. All of them were children of Jacob.

V. 8 - The Levites received tithes as dying men but Melchizedek lives forever. They paid to men that died. Aaron died - one generation of the priesthood after another, but when Abraham paid his tithe to one who did not die -- the everlasting priesthood in type which was a new type of priesthood. Jesus Christ, superior.

V. 11 - The new priesthood, the new way - the perfect priest. It is interesting to compare the Old Testament and the New. And the last word of the Old Testament is curse While the New Testament, the last phrase speaks of grace. There is no design in these endings but they are significant. What is the difference between Malachi and Revelation. The answer is obvious - the coming of Jesus.

V. 11 - Therefore the writer of Hebrews brought this comparison to a sharp focus when he contrasted Jesus, the priest, of the New Covenant and the

Levitical priesthood of the old covenant. Therefore, perfection - whereby the Levitical priesthood - what further need was there that another priest should arrive after the order of Melchizedek. He submits a question to them.

The Jewish religion was designed to promote fellowship between man and God in two ways. By the law and by the priesthood. The law was given so that men could know what God required of them. Now this is where the trouble began - the Jews no doubt had little fear. But they could keep the law. When they entered into covenant with God they promised all that the Lord had spoken we will do. Ex. 19:8. However that they soon discovered that they were unable to keep the law. The law that they had hoped would release them from sin, only revealed their sin. Rom. 7:7. And it brought death in V. 10.

Now the moral defects - something had to bridge the gap. And to build a bridge and the sacrificial system was designed to heal that broken fellowship. And a new priesthood was necessary to open the way to God. And the new priesthood differs from the old. In that it was not dependent upon mere man or human form, as the old priesthood in Lev. 21:16.

Now it would be most interesting if we had time to outline the ceremony in Lev. 8. The priest was to bathe in water so that he would be ceremonially clean. He was clothed in priestly garments. He was anointed with oil. He was touched on the tip of the right ear, his right thumb, and his right big toe with the blood of certain sacrifices, which had been made. After he was ordained he had to observe certain washings with water, so many anointings with oil, and cut his hair a certain way. The entire schedule was strictly physical. The Jewish priesthood depended upon physical things. Character, ability, personality, had nothing to do with it.

But the new priesthood is depended upon a life that is indestructible.

Christ's priesthood depends not only on physical things but on the character, personality, and the being. It is no longer outward ceremonies. But it is inward. The fact that he came forth from the tribe of Judah speaks that the priest of the Levite had cancelled out the law - it had been completely wiped out. And that the whole new Jesus could do what the old priesthood never could do. He can give us access to God. How does he do that. What is it that keeps a man from having access to God. What is it that puts up the barriers anyway.

V. 12 For the priesthood being changed, and V. 14 - came out of another tribe. V. 16 Who is made not after the law of a carnal commandment but after the power of an endless life.

There are two things that put up barriers. First, there is fear. So long as a man is terrified with God he can never be at home with God. And Jesus came to show the love of God.

Second, there is sin. But Jesus on the cross made one perfect sacrifice that atones for sin - conquers sin. And builds a bridge for men back to God.

V. 19 For the Law made nothing perfect. But the bringing in of a better hope did. Further which we draw nigh unto God. And Jesus brought forth this hope. Years ago a mother was carrying her baby over the hills of South Wales, England and she never reached her destination. She was trapped in a blizzard. Lost her way and froze to death. The searchers who found her frozen body marveled that she wore no outer garments to protect her from the cold. She was lifted - and they discovered the reason why. She had taken her coat to wrap her baby and then covered him from the storm with her own body. The infant was David Lloyd George. Who became prime minister of Great Britain during World War I. He became one of England's great statesmen. And made a vital contribution to humanity.

He was always conscious that his life had been spared by the sacrifice of his mother. And that he had been saved for a purpose.

We marvel when we realize that Jesus, our royal priest, gave his life for us. We have been saved with a great personal sacrifice by one who loved us.

Now the question is, will we freely give our lives to him in his service. Let me summarize briefly what we have said thus far in this message. That here we have a royal kingly priest - our Saviour. Because he is the administrator of the kingdom - called the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Heaven. Now the place where this king is going to rule is the king of zion - the prince of peace. That is Salem - which became Jeresalem. And he is a righteous king and a righteous priest. And Jesus is the prince of peace - the church of God - the new Jeresalem - which will be a peaceful community.

We remember also that in his genealogy - his birth and his death are not in the ways as others. That throughout the whole story, that the priesthood passed from hands to hands that were carnal. But Jesus took up the high priesthood forever.

V 21 - 25 - He discusses the greater priesthood as he speaks and stresses first the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek, was confirmed by the oath of God. Which the ordinary priesthood was not. Now this reference was taken from Psalm 110:4. The Lord hath sworn and will not repent. Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. Now God did not need to do that because his word never changes but this thing that was confirmed was utterly unchangeable, in the very fiber of the universe and must remain forever. So then, it is possible that the ordinary priesthood can pass away but the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek can never pass away - that is Jesus Christ can never change because

he has the surety and of course the better testament as explained in V. 22. This is his function in true religion. That is to say that Jesus is the surety of a new kind of agreement. A new kind of relationship between man and God. Wherein was the difference - wherein was the new better than the other. The difference is that the old covenant was based on law and justice and obedience. The new covenant is based entirely on love and the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Under the old commandment or covenant they had access to God but it depended on man's obedience. But the new, it is based on the welcome of the love of God. The old - man based his seeking God on man through a priest. But now it is through Jesus Christ. He is surety that the money will be paid. He is used as a guarantee that he will appear in your place on trial.

V. 24 - He says that this priesthood will be an unchangeable priesthood, but it is going to be permanent. Now under the old system, death came to the priest. They died and were replaced. None of the old order lasted very long. But the priesthood of Jesus is going on forever and ever. It will not be altered or transferred and of course, the priest had to remain in order to complete his service. So the writer of Hebrews says, Jesus is going to remain forever. It is an amazing phrase and thought - that it is going to be for eternity.

Now the high priest that we need is described here in V. 25. Wherefore, he is able to save to the utmost that will come unto him. Seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. Now this is not simply that Christ is able to save from the uttermost - that is, the deepest type of sin. That is true. But no one has stooped too low, committed too many sins but what he will be able to save from sin. Now this speaks about the completeness of the salvation. That it is exhaustive - that it is a cleansing day by day. That it is a continuing

high priest whom we have.

~~What~~ But does it mean - to make intercession. It means to confer with - in favor of. To entreat God. Now this is enough to cause one to exclaim halleluiah!

v 26
But we do not stop there - we begin with the 26th Verse - a certain high priest became us, holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners and made higher than the Heavens. Who needeth not daily as those high priests to offer up sacrifices -- first, for his own sins and then for the sins of the people. For this, he did once when he offered up himself.

Now the high priest had to offer up sacrifices for his own sins and for the sins of the people. And he needed to make these daily offerings. Everyday both the high priest and the people needed to make an offering for sin. Now Christ never needed to offer and sacrifice for his own sin.

And here is his superiority in the value of the sacrifice which he offered. The legal priest cheerfully had to go and offer a beast, such as an oxen, a sheep, or a goat. The blood which they sprinkled was merely inferior animal blood. But Christ was taken not from the firstling of the flock but the choicest of the herd. It was not by blood of bulls or of goats that he sought to procure remission of sin for the guilty. But our text says he offered up himself. He was at once priest and sacrifice. The victim for the Jewish offerings and their costs were trifling considering the offering that was slain for you.

Once for all, needs to be underscored. It was necessary for the priests daily to repeat their sacrifices. Their daily repetition was indispensable. Not so with our great high priest - he never needed to repeat it.

That is why he is able to save unto the uttermost. He has the power. No one has ever asked Jesus to help him and found him unable to do it. He can do for all. Nor shall anyone that trusts in him ever be confounded. He is able to save to the utmost. He makes the salvation complete.

When a Christian friend dies we stand at his bedside. We accompany him to the valley of the shadow of death. We ask him whether he feels that Christ is able to save. He replies to you "yes". When he has lost his power to speak and you whisper to him - he will give you his parting hand, with a smile and a light in his eye and declare that all is well.

Jesus is holy. He never hurt any man. He is stainless. He is different from sinners. And he is higher than the Heavens.

And he offered himself. Two things were necessary in the sacrifice. There was the priest who offered the sacrifice. And second, there was the sacrifice itself.

Not only was Jesus the perfect high priest but he was also the perfect offering, even the sacrifice of himself.

The word "uttermost" is a great word. It is a word of quality - a word of reach which means extent. And it is also a word of quality - fullness of and provision in duration. This is what it means about your salvation.

Now the redemptive blood of Christ is the main issue here and the writer does not side-track it for anything else. The high priest is here proclaimed.

And there is a fountain that is filled with blood and we need to preach it and we need to sing it. And men need to know that they can be cleansed

from their sins. This is the fundamental truth. Now every woman needs to know this. Every teen-ager needs to know this. That the blood will forgive every man or woman, or young person of whatever they have done. Yes, the blood, will cleanse your heart.

All back there in the Old Testament has been superseded by Christ and his blood. This sacrifice.

Now this is not a do-it-yourself and don't you take light the blood of Jesus Christ and don't you make light of it. You keep the emphasis upon it where it ought to be.

Christ came not (to live but to die.) And the significant thing is that once and forever he made the sacrifice.

And he set down forever at the right hand of God.

Now the old priest walked and stood - they never sat down. And it is significant that they never finished their job.

Isn't it marvelous how sympathetic Jesus is. The Bible tells us here that day and night he makes intercession for us. Chapter 4:14, Chapter 9:24. And it was alone that he took it upon himself that he did this - going from the Garden of Gethsemane. And now he has gone within the holy place.

The story came out of the violence and sadness of a Nazi concentration camp of World War II. That illustrates the giving of self. On February 17, 1941, Maximilian Kolbe, the press apostle of Poland was imprisoned by the Gestapo. And was taken to Aauschwitz. It was noted during the roll call during the end of July that a prisoner had escaped and when one escaped, it was the rule

that ten innocent people must die, without consideration - ten are selected to die in the most cruel way. The death of starvation. One cried out, have mercy - I have a wife and children.

Kolbe stepped forward to replace this head of a family and to go with the other nine into the hunger bunker. He became their comforter, preacher, leader, and example. He endured terrible suffering, hunger, and exhaustion. In full consciousness for two long weeks - then they gave him a death injection. He died on August 14th.

The hardened Nazi guards noted dully that prisoners 16 - 670 was dead. But the man to whom he sacrificed himself spends each (August 14th) in reflection and unspeakable gratitude for the one who died for him.

We Christians greatfully remember and serve him who offered up himself in V. 27 for our sins. Jesus was the perfect priest, gave himself - the perfect sacrifice. This is the ever-living high priest that we need. Will he be your choice.