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## *Into Thy Word Bible Study in Hebrews*

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### **Hebrews 7:11-28: *Melchizedek: the Christ Archetype!***

**General idea:** The king and high priesthood of Melchizedek is a template/type and shadow to the Person and Role of Christ, the King and High Priest! We need Jesus as Savior, Lord, and Priest! Consider this, if the law and the priesthood of Aaron were good, sufficient, and working, why did God need to send His Son as a sacrifice? If the line of Levi was so great, why did we still need a Savior—and from a different priestly line, that of Melchizedek? Jesus came from the line of Judah where He did not serve at the altar—He *became* the Altar! Christ is a different kind of priest from a different kind of order; He is far superior and effectual for our salvation, the building of our faith, and Church. He did not need to meet the requirements to serve and be served, but He met them nonetheless. His is the Power and Life we need that will never go away. Even the Psalms point to Christ's priesthood; the old ways that were weak and ineffective have now been set aside for the New Covenant that does work and is better. The Law did not save us or make us perfect; it only gave us a glimmer of the Hope to come. Now we have the Hope of Christ to Whom we can draw near; He is a secured salvation and a Hope that is real and everlasting. He is our Priest forever! Thus, Jesus can now guarantee our salvation and worth in Him. The old system had many flaws, especially the frailty and imperfection of the human priests versus the One we have now Who is eternally perfect; therefore, we do not need to bring earthly sacrifices to God anymore. Jesus paid our debt of sin, so we have a place of honor in heaven. His sacrifice was the perfect, ultimate act that paid it all. He is able, and pleads our case and cause before the Father.

### **Contexts and Background:**

This passage is set at the time the Temple and sacrificial system were still active and this new Christian faith needed real, hard biblical evidence to prove its relevance and significance to the Jews. An argument is made that you no longer need to go to the Temple and to a priest in order to know and relate to God. This is a contrast: the imperfect Levitical and Mosaic Law versus Christ the perfect Sacrifice and Redeemer who fulfills this Law. The old system could not give us access to God or allow us to be in Him, whereas Christ does both. Psalm 110 foretells that this system to know God was to give way to One (Christ) who was far better. Also during this time, the Romans were interfering by appointing their own high priests to have control over the Jews, then disposing of the real ones. This was also prophetic, as in a couple years after this was written, the Temple and the entire Jewish system of faith and practice would be destroyed. Even though the Book of Leviticus tells us the priesthood was "perpetual," it merely pointed to Christ who is "eternal". The sacrificial system was transitory both for this worship and practice and for their culture, because a new system based on

the Torah will come into play as the replacement for the Temple. The point is that the old system is obsolete and has been superseded by Christ's role as Priest and Sacrifice; He is greater and superior to the old way anyway, so why bother with it (Gen. 14:17-24, Ex. 32:10; 40:15; Psalm 110; Heb. 5:6)?

**Commentary: Word and Phrase Meanings:**

- *Perfection.* The Levitical priesthood and system were not able to give people an intimate relationship with or access to God. Thus, the law and priesthood were only temporary and would be replaced with a permanent solution—Christ the Redeemer. The term “last days,” often used in Scripture to mean the New Covenant we have in Christ that superseded the Law, is often misunderstood today as meaning waiting for Christ's return, which is only an application of it, not the substance; Christ's work is the Substance. This was a philosophical term used by Philo, meaning the perfect priest, who Philo saw as Levi (I guess he did not read Genesis). What is perfect does not need to change; the old way was flawed and only pointed to the One who is Perfect, and now His New Order is here (Heb. 1:2; 4:8; 8:7).
- *Levitical priesthood.* Refers to the Law of Moses and how we must love our Lord and at the same time follow the 619 laws and offer sacrifices for our atonement to be right with God. Under the Law, we are all under condemnation before God; under Christ, we are not. The priests administered this Law and mediated between the people and God; Christ fulfills all of this. Just as a temporary change happened during the exile, now a permanent change supersedes the Levitical system—the Kingdom of Christ, a *better covenant* (Jer. 3:16; Rom. 8)
- *Melchizedek.* Conveys that Christ is not in or from the order of Aaron and the Levitical priesthood. Here, it is argued that Christ is superior to the Levitical system that pointed to Christ; now, Christ is the Ultimate, Eternal High Priest. The Jews expected a warrior messiah from the tribe of Judah and most of the priestly groups expected a priestly messiah from the line of Levi; here Christ fulfills both roles (Psalm 110; Heb. 7:3-10).
- *Not ...ancestry.* Jesus was ordained not by man's laws and regulations, but by the perfect oath of God; yet He fulfills man's need of a Savior (Deut. 18:1)
- *The power of an indestructible life.* Christ is the One who is eternal and holds the “indomitable” power, proven by His sinless life and resurrection. This refers to Psalm 110:4 and how Melchizedek is a priest forever who was the forerunner to Christ (Rom. 6:9-10).
- *Former regulation.* The Law was not a bad or a wrong idea; in fact, it is holy and good and points to a God of Holiness and us as a people in sin and in need of redemption and reconciliation. It was also a pointer to Christ and our

need for Him, as no one was able to obey and fulfill the Law's demands, but Christ does on our behalf. Now we have a better system—a perfect way: His Way (Rom. 7:12).

- *Weak and useless.* Indicates that the Law and system could not redeem a sinful person; it was only “preparatory” and looked to Christ who is the fulfillment (Matt. 5:17; Gal. 3:23-25).
- *Better hope.* God's promise is certain and perfect so we have real, effectual hope. In Christ, we have complete redemption, thus the New Covenant is better than the old system that could not do this. Christ's work assures our salvation when we receive Him by Faith, and He brings us into the very presence of God (Col 1:5).
- *Not without an oath.* God has sworn this; it is unchangeable and effective. This means there was no oath by God with the institution of the Levitical priesthood order, because an oath is subscribed to something greater, and Christ is the Greater. Christ is supreme; they could not appeal to a higher power or order, as in the human priestly system, because Christ is the Higher Power. Jesus' Priesthood is established by a Divine oath. God says it is so, Christ is greater; He assures Christ's Priesthood, it is sealed, and it is effectual. This is God's promise that binds; He pledges that this is trustworthy and infallible (Gen. 15:8-21; 22:17; Psalm 89:35, 49; 106:26; 110; 132:11; Heb. 6:13-18).
- *The guarantee/surety.* Jesus is our security and has become our better Covenant so we can go before God directly (Jer. 31:31-34).
- *Better covenant.* This was a promise in the Old Testament and is now a reality because of Christ. The Levitical order was an order of deficiency. It was one of duty and honoring God, but it was also incomplete because it was waiting for the One (Christ) to complete it. We could not work for a salvation that we could not attain; now we have it as a gift of grace through Christ.
- *Death prevented.* The priests did not have permanence; they could not meet anyone's real needs. Because of the frailty of human life, and the weakness of the flesh and the will, they could not perform their duties with efficiency and true sincerity. This also means *impermanence*; the cycle of human life from birth to death, and in Christianity, our sinful nature as physical death, prevented them from carrying out their office.
- *Completely/uttermost.* Jesus saves us completely! Our salvation is comprehensive, meeting ever, real, and deep need. He is our eternal Representative. Christ is the perfect High Priest who is forever. It is one of permanence, and He is the eternal God who made for us an everlasting perfect way—His Way. (John 17; 1 John 2:1).

- *Intercede.* Christ's work and role intercedes on our behalf. This also paved the way for prayer and the eternal intercession we have now—the ability and call to draw near to God.
- *High priest meets our need.* Our greatest problem is solved, our greatest need—salvation—is given, our sin is redeemed, and we are freed from its consequences. The human priests could never compare to Christ; they were the representatives, but He is the Real One. The Levitical priests had to go through elaborate cleansing ceremonies prior to entering the temple, and even more so for the once-a-year Day of Atonement, even being excluded from everyone for a week so not to be defiled (Lev. 16:6-16; Ex. 29:29-30).
- *Holy, blameless, pure.* Jesus Christ, the perfect substitute, sacrificed Himself once for all, meaning because He was sinless, He did not have to make any personal atonement or sacrifice for His sins, which a human priest must do. Now Christ is our atonement cover; He really is these things, whereas as the human representative could only pretend—to a point (Heb. 9:12, 26; 10:2, 10).
- *Set apart from sinners.* Jesus, who was without sin, identifies with us and lived a life on our behalf to save us. Thus He understands our lives, situations, and circumstances; He can relate to our plight and gives us His hand and heart. This also refers to how Jesus handled temptation and remained sinless—something we could not do, nor could the Law fully atone for us permanently (Heb. 2:18; 4:15-5:3).
- *Day after day.* Jesus deals with our sins effectually and completely. Also refers to the duty of continually offering sacrifices—not just on the Day of Atonement, but also throughout the year. Now Jesus performs this role perfectly (Ex. 29:36-42).
- *Men who are weak.* Referring to the sinful nature, fragility, and selfishness of humanity, able to truly represent neither themselves nor one another. Christ is the One who is Permanent and who saves us eternally and continually (Gen. 1:26-28; Rom. 3:23; 6:23).
- *Made perfect forever.* Refers to Christ's sinless life; His work on the cross and His resurrection qualifies Him to be our Savior, Lord, and priest.

### **Devotional Thoughts and Applications:**

Real, effectual leadership is always characterized by humbleness as well as indebtedness and gratitude to God. Anything else is a waste and an insult to God who came as the Ultimate Suffering Servant! If you desire to be a mature, effectual Christ-follower, if you are in leadership or desire to be, you must in

prayer seek Him and ask these questions: *Do you have a heart after God? Do you have a heart for His children?* Now think and pray about this one: *Do you realize His role that paid your debt of sin?* Jesus Christ is our Perfect substitute for punishment. He faced temptation on our behalf, lived a perfect life on our behalf, and in so doing, perfectly obeyed God and set a tone that we can follow and hold on to forever.

How has that affected your life and relationships with others? We have to realize some of the depth, such as this passage showing us Christ's intercession on our behalf. He goes to God the Father, pays our ransom, purchases our salvation, and He lives to do this! This must manifest itself in how we respond back to Him and make intercession by prayer and action in others' lives too, just as our Lord demonstrated as He walked this earth. But for this to work, to actively seek God's presence and intercession so it flows from Him into us and to others around us, we have to look to Him. We have to see our weakness and need for His continual intervention into our lives so we have a heart for Him and others. Christ was our offering; how can you be an offering to bring Him honor and show Him your gratitude? How would that improve your life and circumstances?

**The Essential Inductive Questions** (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

**Additional Questions:**

1. If God were to give you a long life, what legacy would you like to leave? What legacy do you think He wants you to leave? What is the difference?
2. How does Jesus meet your need? How and why did He become the Altar?
3. What is the Hope of Christ for you? How can His hope give you fuel for life?
4. How did Melchizedek point to God and the Christ to come? Why is this important? How do you point to Christ?

5. What does it mean to you that we have a God who is there, who cares, and in whom we can have assurance and take refuge?
6. Why do you need Jesus as Savior, Lord, and Priest? If the law and the priesthood of Aaron were good, sufficient, and working, why did God need to send His Son as a sacrifice?
7. Why is this order that Christ is in (Melchizedek) far superior and effectual for our salvation and building of our faith and Church?
8. How is Christ your Power and Life? How do you feel that He will never go away and that He gives you all that you need?
9. Do you have a heart after God? Do you have a heart for His children? Why is this important for Christian leadership and maturity? How can you make this more so? What would it do for you?
10. How has Christ affected your life and relationships with others? Why is this important for Christian leadership and maturity? How can you make this more so? What would it do for you?
11. Do you realize His role that paid your debt of sin? Why is this important for Christian leadership and maturity? How can you incorporate this more and what would it do for you?
12. Why is Christian leadership to be characterized by humbleness? How does your indebtedness and gratitude to God help you lead? If you do not “get” this yet, how can you fully see that leading from self efforts, without humbleness to Christ and others, is a waste and an insult to God who came as the Ultimate Suffering Servant?