

Melchizedek's Priesthood Trumped Aaron's Priesthood
Hebrews 7:11-14
Part One

Let me ask you this question. Can a true genuine born again Christian be in two places at one time? And what is the answer? The answer is yes! They can be physically present in this world while at the same time spiritually present before God's throne of grace.

Let me read for you **Hebrews 4:16** and what does it say? **"Therefore [while living in this world and dealing with the stuff of this world] let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."** So based on this verse can a true genuine born again Christian actually be in two places at one time? Yes! Absolutely! They can be physically present in this world while at the same time spiritually present before God's throne of grace.

This obviously is an incredible privilege and hopefully we, as born again believers, will not squander it. And who made all this possible? Was it the Levitical priests under the Levitical system? No! It is Christ, the One whom God appointed as our great heavenly high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. He is the One who has made this all possible.

Now hopefully everything that I have just shared with you will come alive for us this morning as we return back to our study of Hebrews, which was written to a group of struggling Hebrews believers living in Rome who in the midst of a great persecution were actually considering returning back to Judaism. And what did the author choose to do in order to strengthen their faith so that they would not return to Judaism?

The author of Hebrews, in seeking to strengthen their faith, chose to focus on the superiority of Christ.

He began with emphasizing Christ's superiority over the Old Testament prophets, then he focused on Christ's superiority over the angels, then he focused on Christ's superiority over Moses and now he is presently, in our ongoing examination of this book, focusing on the superiority of Christ's priesthood over all other priesthood. This section began in **Hebrews 4:14**

and will continue all the way down in **Hebrews 10:18**. So, what have we seen so far?

In **Hebrews 4:14-16** the author introduced Christ's heavenly high priestly ministry, which he then pointed out in **Hebrews 5:1-10** was according to the order Melchizedek. This was followed by a warning section which extended from **Hebrews 5:11-6:20**. And then after completing this warning section, what did the author do next? The author returned back to the subject of Melchizedek. And what did the author do as he returned back to this subject in **Hebrews 7:1-10**?

The author in Hebrews 7:1-10 highlighted the greatness of Melchizedek and his priesthood. And why did he do this? He did this since both Melchizedek and his priesthood were Old Testament types of Christ, to demonstrate the far greater and fuller reality of Christ and His priesthood, which were the New Testament fulfillments of the Old Testament types. And this is where we left off.

So after this author highlighted the greatness of Melchizedek and his priesthood for the reason that I just stated, what did he do then?

The author in Hebrews 7:11-28 explained why it was necessary for Aaron's priesthood to be replaced by Christ's priesthood which was according to the order of Melchizedek. So why was it necessary? This is the question that we will begin to answer this morning.

First of all, it was necessary because Aaron's priesthood could not bring about "perfection" Hebrews 7:11-14.

So let me read for you **Hebrews 7:11-14** and see if this is not so. **"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."** So based

on these verses can we say that it was necessary for Aaron's priesthood to be replaced by Melchizedek's priesthood because Aaron's priesthood could not bring about perfection? Yes, I believe we can.

But before we begin to look at these verses more carefully, I would like us first of all to consider this word "perfection," which obviously is a very important word in regard to understanding these verses.

So within the context of Hebrews, what does this word mean? The word "perfection" (TELEIOSIS) here, as elsewhere in Hebrews, does not mean "without flaws," but rather it has to do with "arriving at a desired end" or "reaching a particular goal."

So in this case, what would have been the desired end or the particular goal that Aaron's priesthood was unable to achieve? The desired end or the specific goal that Aaron's priesthood was unable to achieve was making people acceptable to God in such a way that they gained personal access to God. Aaron's priesthood did not do this very well at all. In other words, it was unable to bring about "perfection."

Again this is not to say that Aaron's priesthood and the Levitical system that God had provided Israel had not provided some degree of acceptability and accessibility to God. It had. But the degree of acceptability and accessibility was extremely limited.

And how extremely limited was that acceptability and accessibility? It was so limited that only the high priest of Israel, once a year, after a great deal of preparation and with great attention to detail, could approach the visible manifestation of God's presence within the Holy of Holies in order to offer up blood sacrifices on his behalf and on behalf of the people.

And did those blood sacrifices that he offered up to God, once a year, on behalf of himself and the people make it possible for other people other than himself to approach the visible manifestation of God's presence in the Holy of Holies? No!

In fact, if anyone other than the high priest ever tried to approach the visible manifestation of God's presence in the Holy of Holies, what would have happened? They would have died! And why would they have died? They

would have died because they, in spite of the high priests sacrifices, would still have not been acceptable to God and therefore would have been judged by God if they did in fact attempt to approach Him according to **Numbers 18:7**.

In fact, if you are familiar with Israel's tabernacle, they would have been subject to death even before that had gotten to the Holy of Holies, for in order to get to the Holy of Holies they would first have had to pass through a room called "**the Holy Place,**" which was a room where the priests of Israel, under the Levitical system, were to carry out very specific priestly functions. And what was the consequence for entering that room if a person was not a priest? Based on **Numbers 18:21-22**, the consequence of entering that room would have been death.

So had Aaron's priesthood and the Levitical system actually provided some degree of acceptability as well as accessibility? Yes! The Levitical system provided one day of acceptability and accessibility for the high priest of the nation of Israel and that was all that it provided. The rest of the nation of Israel, in spite of the sacrifices that the high priest offered up on their behalf on the Day of Atonement, continued to be excluded from entering into this most holy place where God's presence was visibly manifested.

So did the Aaron's priesthood and the Levitical system bring about "perfection" or in other words, had Aaron's priesthood and the Levitical system brought about "acceptability" and "accessibility" for the people? No! Aaron's priesthood and the Levitical system had not even come close to accomplishing that end or achieving that particular goal.

And because it had failed so miserably to achieve "perfection," what did God do? He replaced it with the priesthood of Christ, which was according to the order of Melchizedek. And how do we know this? We know this because of what the author said to his readers in **verse 11**.

In this verse there is an "**if**" ... "**then**" kind of construction, or in other words "if something was in fact true, such as we see at the beginning of **verse 11** that "**perfection was through the Levitical priesthood,**" then we could conclude something else to be true. And what might that be?

Let us now look at the end of **verse 11**? **“Now If perfection was through the Levitical priesthood [Then we could conclude, as we see at the end of verse 11] 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?** And of course what would have been the expected answer? There would have been no further need for another priest if in fact the Levitical priesthood had in fact brought about perfection.

But the truth was that another priest had arisen! And this author knew that! And his readers knew that! And who was that other priest? Christ! Christ was that other priest, appointed by God, according to the order Melchizedek.

So considering this fact, in light of the “if” ... “then” kind of construction in **verse 11**, what can we conclude? Because of the failure of the Levitical priesthood to bring about “perfection,” God replaced the Levitical priesthood with Christ’s priesthood, which was according to the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:11). This is what we can conclude!

So now let me ask you this question. Did the failure of the Levitical priesthood to bring about “perfection” and the necessity for its subsequent replacement by Christ’s priesthood, which was according to the order of Melchizedek, surprise God? No! Not at all!

Though Aaron’s priesthood and the Levitical system failed to bring **“perfection,”** this should not imply to us that God, in any way, ever expected that it would bring “perfection.” He knew from the very beginning that it would not be able to do this.

So why did God establish the Levitical priesthood or in other words the priesthood of Aaron? He established the Levitical priesthood not to bring about “perfection” but rather to point us to Christ and His priesthood (Hebrews 10:1).

So how do we know this? Let me now read for you **Hebrews 10:1. “For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year [referring to the high priests of Israel on the Day of Atonement and the Levitical system], make perfect those who draw near.”**

The Law and the Levitical priesthood that was contained in the Law was in the mind of God simply a shadow of the good things to come, one of those good things being what? One of those good things being the priesthood of Christ, which unlike the Levitical priesthood would actually be able to deliver “perfection.”

So was it necessary for Aaron’s priesthood to be replaced based on this “if” ... “then” construction in **verse 11**. Yes! I believe it was.

But there is more to **verse 11** than just this “if” ... “then” construction; there is also a parenthetical statement that this author imbedded within his “if” ... “then” construction.

And what was this parenthetical statement? “**For on the basis of it** [referring to the Levitical priesthood, the very priesthood that was unable to bring about “perfection”] **the people received the Law.**”

This is the parenthetical statement that the author introduced in **verse 11**. It is not the main idea in **verse 11**; the main idea was that Aaron’s priesthood or in other words the Levitical priesthood was unable to bring about “**perfection**” and therefore had to be replaced. But in order to make it easier for his readers to embrace this main ideal, this author felt it was necessary to make sure that his readers understood the relationship between the Levitical priesthood and the Law. And why did he feel it was important? This will become clearer in **verses 12-14** but for right now let us simply be satisfied with what the author wanted his readers to know about the relationship between the Levitical priesthood and the Law. So, what did the author want them to understand about that relationship based on this parenthetical statement imbedded in **verse 11**, which read, “**For on the basis of it** [referring to the Levitical priesthood the very priesthood that was unable to bring about “perfection”] **the people received the law.**”

So based on this parenthetical statement, what did the author want his readers to understand?

Based on the parenthetical statement in verse 11, the author wanted his readers to understand that it was on the basis of the Levitical priesthood that Israel received the Law and not the other way around.

Or we could say it this way. Because God wanted a certain kind of priesthood instituted, which was the priesthood of Aaron or in other words the Levitical priesthood so that it might in turn point us to Christ, He then moved Moses to write the Mosaic Law in a certain way in order to bring about that priesthood. It was not the Law driving the priesthood. It was the priesthood that was driving the Law.

Some people might think it is the other way around, that the Mosaic Law was the reason for Aaron's priesthood, but from this author's standpoint, and under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, this author explained to his readers and to us that because God wanted a certain priesthood established, He therefore moved Moses to write specific things in the Law so that the priesthood that God wanted to be established, which was the Levitical priesthood, might be established.

So now let me ask you a question. If the Levitical priesthood was the driving force for the Law, as stated by this author in the parenthetical statement in **verse 11**, and then this priesthood was actually replaced by God because of weakness, which was also made clear in **verse 11**, would the replacement of the Levitical priesthood with Christ's priesthood, precipitate a change of Law also? Absolutely!

And this brings us to **verse 12** and what does it say? **“For when the priesthood (referring to the Levitical priesthood) is changed [which of course this author and his readers knew had been changed. Then what did the author go on to say based on the parenthetical statement in verse 11?], of necessity there takes place a change of law also.”** So, what did the author conclude in **verse 12** based on the parenthetical statement of **verse 11**?

If the Levitical priesthood is changed, then there must also be change in respect to the Mosaic Law (Hebrews 7:12).

Or in other words, if God in His sovereignty and in light of His eternal purposes swept away the Levitical priesthood because of its weakness, He also swept away the Mosaic Law. This is in essence what is being stated in **verse 12**. So how is this thought helpful in advancing his main point established in **verse 11**? It is rather simple. If the main point is true, that God in His sovereignty has in fact swept away the Levitical priesthood because

of its weakness, then we should be able to verify that by examining whether or not the Law has changed.

So has it changed? Let us now read **Hebrews 7:13-14**. **“For the one concerning whom these things are spoken [referring to Christ] belongs to another tribe [or in other words a totally different tribe other than the tribe of Levi, from which every priest of Israel was to originate based on the Mosaic Law and the instructions given in Numbers 18], from which no one has officiated at the altar. [And then what does did the author go on to say in verse 14?] For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses [in the Mosaic Law] spoke nothing concerning priests.”**

So based on these verses, should it have been clear that the Mosaic Law had in fact changed with the appointment of Christ as high priest according to Melchizedek? Yes! It should have been clear. And if that was clear, then what should that have proven? That the Levitical priesthood, because of its weakness, or in other words because of its inability to bring acceptability and accessibility for the people of God, or in other words “perfection,” had been swept away by God and with it the Mosaic Law was also swept away.

We as believers, as followers, have been given a great gift. Christ our great heavenly high priest has made it possible for us to approach God with boldness. We are able to do this because Christ’s sacrifice on our behalf has not only made us acceptable to God but has also made it possible for us enjoy continuous access to Him and His heavenly throne.

What a blessing! This was not the experience of the children of Israel, for the Levitical system was not able to achieve this “perfection.” They were always on the outside of the tent of meeting and never on the inside. But this is not true of us.

May we by the grace of God be filled with praise and thanksgiving knowing that Christ our great heavenly high priest has made it possible for us to enjoy communion with God today and forever.