

Melchizedek's Priesthood Trumped Aaron's Priesthood
Hebrews 7:20-22
Part 3

Let me ask you a question. If we have been promised something of great value and then another person with unlimited resources is put in a position to make sure that what we have been promised, even in spite of our weaknesses and shortcomings, will be realized or in other words will come to fruition, would that be comforting to us? Absolutely! How could it not be comforting?

So, what does this scenario have to do with us you might ask? It has everything to do with us. God has promised us something of great value. And what has he promised us? We have been promised that if we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ that we will be saved or in other words we have been promised that if we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ that we will be forever acceptable to God and thus we will be forever able to enjoy access to God and the blessedness of His presence both in time and eternity.

But God did not stop with simply making this promise to us. He has also provided us Christ our great heavenly high priest, who in His position as high priest will make sure that God's promise to us will in fact be realized or in other words will come to fruition.

Now hopefully what 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 Hebrew 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 do this?

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 priesthoods. 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 highlighting his greatness in **Hebrews 7:1-10**.

And why did he do this? He did this in order to highlight the far more exceeding greatness of Christ and His priesthood since Christ and His priesthood were the New Testament fulfillment of these Old Testament types or in other words the New Testament fulfillment of what Melchizedek and his priesthood were only picturing but were not able to fulfill since they were only a shadow of the true reality, which was Christ and His priesthood.

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

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 have begun to answer and will CONTINUE to answer this morning.

So what was the first reason that we isolated for why it was necessary for Aaron's priesthood to be replaced by Christ's priesthood? This was the first reason: It was necessary because Aaron's priesthood could not bring about "perfection" (Hebrews 7:11-14) or in other words it was not able to make people acceptable to God in such a way that they gained personal access to God. We saw this in **Hebrews 7:11-14**.

So what was the second reason that we isolated for why it was necessary for Aaron's priesthood to be replaced by Christ's priesthood? This was the second reason: It was necessary because the replacement of Aaron's priesthood with Christ's priesthood brought about a "better hope" (Hebrews 7:15-19). Or in other words it's replacement made it possible for people through Christ and His priesthood to enjoy what they could never have enjoyed under Aaron's priesthood, which was acceptability and accessibility to God. This point was made by this author in **Hebrews 7:15-19**.

MESSAGE

And this morning we will be considering a third reason for why it was necessary for Aaron's priesthood to be replaced by Christ's priesthood. So what was this third reason? This was the third reason:

It was necessary because of God's oath to Christ (Hebrews 7:20-22). So now let me read for you **Hebrews 7:20-22** and see if this is not so. And what do these verses say? They say this, **"And inasmuch as it was not without an oath (21) (for they indeed became priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One who said to Him, "The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, You are a priest forever"); (22) so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant."** So based on these verses can we say that it was necessary to replace Aaron's priesthood with Christ's priesthood because of God's oath to Christ? And I believe the answer would be, "yes."

So now let us look at these verses more carefully and see if this is not so. So how does **verse 20** begin? It begins with the word **"inasmuch"** When the author used this word he was not preparing to draw a conclusion based on what he had said earlier in **verse 19** about the **"bringing in of a better hope through which we draw near to God"** but rather he was preparing to provide additional argumentation for why Aaron's priesthood had to be replaced by Christ's priesthood.

So after the author had prepared the way for this additional argumentation, with the word **"inasmuch,"** what did the author do next?

He began to unfold his new line of argumentation, a line of argumentation that would be based on an oath that had been sworn by someone at the time of Christ's inauguration as priest.

So let us now continue to read **verse 20** and see if this is not so. And what does it say? It says this, **"And inasmuch as it (or in other words Christ's priesthood) was not without an oath."** So, in light of these words, would it be safe to say that the author's new line of argumentation that he was beginning to introduce in **verse 20** would in fact be based on an oath that someone swore at the time of Christ's inauguration as priest? And I believe that the answer would have to be, "Yes."

Now at this point in time, I would like to think that we are all very much interested in this oath, upon which this new line of argumentation would be based but the author was not yet ready at

this particular point in the text to give any further information about this oath. So rather than giving further information what did he do?

The author after having introduced the fact that an oath had accompanied the inauguration of Christ's priesthood then used that fact in Hebrews 7:21 to highlight a sharp **contrast** between the Levitical priesthood and the priesthood of Christ.

So now let us read the first part of **verse 21** and see if this is not so. And what does it say? It says this, **“for they indeed became priests without an oath, but He with an oath...”** So did this author after having introduced the fact that an oath had accompanied the inauguration of Christ's priesthood then highlight a sharp contrast between the Levitical priesthood and the priesthood of Christ? Yes! So now let us look more carefully at this part of **verse 21** and see if this is not so.

So how does this section of the verse begin? It begins with these words, **“for they indeed became priests without an oath.”** So who was this author referring to when he told his readers **“for they indeed became priests without an oath”**?

The priests who **“indeed became priests without an oath”** were the **Levitical** priests. The fact that they were the Levitical priests can be established by the immediate context. The fact that no oath accompanied their inauguration as priests can be established by reading **Leviticus 8**, which records for us the biblical account of the inauguration of the Levitical priesthood.

So after having stated this fact about the inauguration of the Levitical priesthood, that it was without an oath the author then went on to say **“but He (or in other words Christ was inaugurated as a priest) with an oath”** thus restating what he had already said in **verse 20** but this time rather than stating it negatively he stated it positively.

So did the author after introducing the fact that Christ's priesthood was “not without an oath” in **verse 20** then go on in the first part of **verse 21** to establish a stark contrast between the Levitical priesthood and the priesthood of Christ? Yes! Absolutely! And what was that sharp contrast? This was the sharp contrast: The Levitical priesthood had not been inaugurated with an oath but Christ's priesthood **had been** inaugurated with an oath (Hebrews 7:21).

So now having established the sharp contrast between the Levitical priesthood, which had NOT BEEN inaugurated with an oath and Christ's priesthood that HAD BEEN inaugurated with an

oath the author was now ready to support what he had just said. And how did he do that? The author in seeking to support what he had just said about an oath having accompanied the inauguration of Christ's priesthood then quoted from **Psalm 110:4**.

Let us go back to **verse 21** and see if this is not so but this time we will read the entire verse. And what does it say? It says this, **“for they (the Levitical priests) indeed became priests without an oath, but He (or in other words Christ) with an oath (and then what does it say? It says this ...) through the One who said to Him** (Or in other words “through the one who said to Christ”... now here comes the Old Testament quotation...) **“The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, ‘You are a priest forever.’”**

So did this author in seeking to support what he had just said, about an oath having accompanied Christ's inauguration, introduce a quotation from **Psalm 110:4**? Yes! Absolutely!

But this verse, was not only introduced by this author to support the fact that an oath had in fact been sworn by someone on the day of Christ's inauguration as priest, but far more importantly, this verse was introduced to supply some very important additional information about this oath.

So what was some of this very important additional information about this oath that accompanied Christ's inauguration, that was supplied by Psalm 110:4? The first very important piece of information was this:

Psalm 110:4 made it clear that it was the **“Lord”** (KURIOS) who swore an oath to “Him” or in other words to Christ on the day of His inauguration as priest. So why was this piece of information so important?

This piece of information was important because knowing that it was the Lord who swore the oath to Christ at his inauguration makes what was sworn in that oath **“doubly assured.”**

What do I mean by this? This is what I mean. When God speaks, we can be assured that it is true because God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). But if God in addition to this then swears that what He has spoken is true then we can be doubly assured that what God has spoken is true.

So why would God feel it necessary to doubly assure someone of something He has said? It would not because of His weakness but rather because of our weakness. This was made clear to us earlier in **Hebrews 6:17** when the author of Hebrews referenced the oath that God had sworn to Abraham. It was not for God's sake that He swore an oath to Abraham but rather it was for Abraham's sake and for the sake of the **“heirs of promise,”** or in other words for the sake of all

those who would benefit from the promises, that God had made to Abraham, which of course would include us.

And the same thing is true here. God did not swear an oath to Christ at the inauguration of His priesthood for His sake but for the sake of others or in other words **“for our sake.”**

And what do I mean by this? This question leads us to the second very important piece of information that **Psalm 110:4** revealed about this oath that was sworn on the day of Christ’s inauguration as priest. So what was this second very important piece of information? This was the information:

Psalm 110:4 also made it clear that the oath that the “Lord” swore to Christ on the day of His inauguration as priest was that He would be a priest **“forever.”**

So now knowing that the oath that God swore to Christ on the day of His inauguration as priest, was that He would be a priest **“forever,”** we can now hopefully see why it was necessary for the Levitical priesthood to be replaced by Christ’s priesthood. And why was it necessary? It was the necessary by-product of God’s oath to Christ. For if Christ’s priesthood was indeed forever, which we can be doubly assured of because of what God said and because of what He has sworn, then of course the Levitical priesthood had to be replaced.

So now having established this sharp contrast between the Levitical priesthood and Christ’s priesthood, based on an oath that had been sworn by God to Christ at the inauguration of His priesthood, which of necessity required the replacement of the Levitical priesthood with Christ’s “forever” priesthood, what did the author do next?

After the author established the necessity for the replacement of the Levitical priesthood with Christ’s priesthood based on God’s oath to Christ he then explained how Christ, because of God’s oath, has become the **“guarantee”** of a better covenant (Hebrews 7:22).

So now let me read for you **Hebrews 7:22** and see if this is not so. And what does it say? It says this, **“so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.”** So what does this mean?

The word “guarantee” (ENGYOS), which can also be translated “guarantor” referred to a person who assumed **responsibility** for another person’s debt or in other words in this context the “guarantee” or “guarantor” referred to a person who assumed responsibility for another person’s promise.

In this case what is the specific promise that Christ, having become our forever high priest, has assumed personal responsibility for? It is the promise made by God, in what the author referred to as a “**better covenant**” or in other words in the “**New Covenant**” or we could say it this way: it is the promise made by God that if we would believe on the Lord Jesus Christ that we would be saved or in other words that we would become forever acceptable to God and that God would become forever accessible to us.

When God swore the oath to Christ and He became our forever high priest He became the guarantee of God’s New Covenant promises for in that role He assumed the responsibility for the fulfillment of those **promises**.

CONCLUSION

When we by faith, based on the New Covenant promise of God, accepted Christ as our Lord and Savior we were saved. We were made acceptable to God and we gained access to God not only in time but also for all eternity.

And who is our guarantee or guarantor that this promise of eternal acceptability and accessibility will be fulfilled? Christ, our forever high priest, the One who will forever function as our high priest at the right hand of the throne of God is our guarantee or guarantor that what God has promised us in the New Covenant will in fact be fulfilled.

May God give us the grace to understand that God’s placement of Christ at His right hand as our forever-heavenly priest was to **assure** us that His promises to us would be fulfilled.