

**March 9, 2022**

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GO FAST – I mean FAST – Try to get ‘em out early!

We’re in a series called Greater Than – because the New Testament goes to great lengths to explain how Jesus is far superior to anyone and anything. All of the heroes of the faith, every power of darkness, the devil and every demon, every ruler or king who has ever lived… and concepts like Fear, Shame, Condemnation and even our own Conscience. Tonight we’ll do Part 2 of this one – because this one is kinda global in scope. So without a long introduction – let’s dig in and see how Jesus is Greater Than the Levite Priests.

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**Jesus is from the wrong *tribe***

All the priests under the Law of Moses had to come from the tribe of Levi. That’s why they were called Levites. That’s why we have a Book of Leviticus – the word just means “pertaining to descendants of Levi”. Bloodline was the first and most important criteria when it came to being a priest. Even to the point that the entire tribe of Levi got NO land in the Promised Land. When they finally got there, and were dividing up the land, tribe by tribe – The entire clan of Levi got nothing. For two reasons: First, the Lord was to be their inheritance. HE was their portion, their share. And secondly, the Levites were scattered all over Israel, because all the other Israelites needed priests that they could get to. And no other tribe could serve as a priest. It HAD to be a Levite. So if you were a little boy from the Tribe of Issachar, you might as well hang it up if your dream was to serve the Lord and serve the people as a priest. It could never happen. So here’s the point for us tonight: Jesus was from the tribe of Judah. So He could never be a priest under the Law of Moses.

**For the priest we are talking about belongs to a different tribe, whose members have never served at the altar as priests. What I mean is, our Lord came from the tribe of Judah, and Moses never mentioned priests coming from that tribe.**

**- Heb 7:13-14 NLT**

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**Jesus had to *supersede* the Law**

Totally different system = Need for a totally different priesthood. Jesus couldn’t just FULFILL this requirement of the Law. He had to rise ABOVE it. But think guys, it only makes sense. The Law couldn’t FIX the problem of our sin which kept us separated from God. It could cover over sin for one year at the most. But it never fixed the core issue: getting at our HEART. We talked a lot 2 weeks ago about the Veil being torn in two from top to bottom. That curtain being torn was a major sign that Judaism as a system is done. The veil, the distance between people and God was removed by Jesus. Because the ground rules have fundamentally changed, then we need a totally different TYPE of priesthood. Levite priests had a function in the OLD setup. But now the setup has changed. THAT’S why we need a different ORDER of priesthood. Jesus isn’t just a BETTER type of Levite. He is a totally different thing.

It’s important that we understand this – The Levite priesthood functioned as the facilitators of the TEMPORARY system that existed to teach us by pictures about the way the REAL, lasting system is intended to work forever. The goal of the real is to bring people – ALL people CLOSER to God. And the Levite priesthood just wasn’t set up to do that.

So the Book of Hebrews says that

**So 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? - Heb 7:11**

So if we needed a Priest who was ABOVE the Law of Moses, who was SUPERIOR to all the Levite Priests, and if Jesus wasn’t qualified to be that kind of priest anyway… then what kind of priest IS He? Well we just saw in that previous scripture:

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**Jesus is a *Melchizedek* Priest**

First, just to give us some context – I want to give you a thumbnail sketch of this guy Melchizedek. Some of you know that name, others it’ll be brand new. Who is He? Where did He come from? And where is He in the Bible? Here’s the short version: In Gen 14 there are just a few lines about Him. Abraham is coming back from rescuing his nephew Lot. He had to fight 10 kings to do it. And on his way back, he meets Melchizedek, called the Priest of the Most High God. He’s also called the King of Salem. (You need a little Hebrew here – Melchizedek means “King of Righteousness.” King of Salem is actually King of Shalom, King of PEACE.) Only two other things happen: Abraham gives Melchizedek a tenth, a TITHE of all the stuff he got from the war – and Melchizedek blesses Abraham. Heb has a bit more to say about this priest Melchizedek:

**For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth of all the spoils, was first of all, by the translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace. Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually. - Heb 7:1-3**

No genealogy, no beginning of days, no end of life – the orig Greek doesn’t say LIKE the Son of God – it says in form AS the Son of God – He remains a priest forever. This is why most NT scholars think that this Melchizedek is Jesus Himself, showing up BEFORE he gets a human body – what’s called a Christophany. It kinda makes sense. But get the big points here – Heb makes a lot out of the fact that Abraham paid tithes to HIM. The Levites RECEIVED tithes but never PAID tithes. Heb says that the whole tribe of Levi was still IN Abraham at this time, and so all the Levites paid tithe to Melchizedek. The other thing that is big here is: Melchizedek BLESSED Abraham. Heb says the GREATER one blesses the LESSER one, every time. And to call Melchizedek greater than Abraham was HUGE to the Jews. Abraham is the Father of ALL the Israelites, and ALL the priests. But this guy Melchizedek is greater.

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**How is a Melchizedek Priest *different*?**

**And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become a priest not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life. - Heb 7:15-16**

There’s so much here – so much that is fun and cool. I want us to kinda hone in on a couple of words in this verse – First is the word “another.” Look what it says – ANOTHER priest arises… that looks like Melchizedek. In Greek there are two words for our English word “another.” One is the word heteros – the other is allos. Both can be translated as “another” – but these words are NOT interchangeable or the same. The first one you already know – heteros. You know it from its use in our word heterosexual. It literally means “Another – but of a different KIND”. As a heterosexual, yes you are a sexual being, but only with a different KIND. The other Greek word, Allos, means another one of the SAME kind. For example – The wise men went back to their country ANOTHER way. Or the soldier who told Jesus, “You don’t have to come to heal my servant – I know how it works – I tell one soldier to do this and he does it – and I tell ANOTHER soldier to go here and he goes. Another way, another soldier . . . it’s another one of the SAME kind. But the Greek word Heteros is not another one of the same – it’s saying we need an entirely different KIND of thing. It’s like this: If I wanted to get rid of my Toyota. I drive my Toyota to the dealer, and tell him, “I wanna trade my Toyota for another Toyota” – That’s ALLOS. But if I tell the dealer, “I’m here for ANOTHER car – and no, I don’t want a Toyota, I want a Lamborghini” That would be HETEROS. Yes I want ANOTHER car – but I want a totally DIFFERENT KIND of car. To apply this to this Scripture - We don’t have another priest just like the ones before; we now have One who can do what the other ones couldn’t do. That’s the point of another – a cool word showing the distinction between Christ and Aaron priests. A different priest… of a different order, who could do what Aaron could never do. And that, my friends is just one reason why God chose Greek for the NT. You can be clearer – you can say MORE. In English, we don’t know WHICH you’re talking about until you explain it. In Greek we know right off the bat. Jesus is ANOTHER KIND – not just “gimme another one of those”. The other word I want to dig into in this verse is the word ARISES. Heb says that another priest ARISES, and this one doesn’t look like Aaron or a Levite – he looks like Melchizedek. And without getting too far into the high grass here – I LOVE the word the Bible uses for ARISES here. The word is ANISTATAI – arise. But Greek utilizes VOICES as well as TENSES and this verb is in the middle voice that is reflexive. That doesn’t excite you? Hahaha 😉 middle voice reflexive means that the verb is acting on ITSELF. Jesus, as our Priest, ARISES on His own, By Himself. Paul would’ve understood the importance of this. NO Levite priest could make Himself a priest. You had to first INHERIT the priesthood – and then there was this HUGE ceremony (we just read it last week in our daily Bible readings) where someone else ORDAINS you. Just like in our tradition. Someone else lays hands on you, sets you apart. Not this way with Jesus. It’s the SAME verb tense and voice that told us that Jesus RESURRECTED. Nobody GOT HIM UP. He got up all by Himself!

And finally – look at the last qualifier, the last criteria that Jesus brings to the table – that NOBODY else could’ve done: Look at it! He has become a priest, NOT on the basis of a law of PHYSICAL requirement, but according to the POWER of an INDESTRUCTIBLE LIFE! O yea! So He’s not from the right tribe, He’s not got the right blood, the right resume? Then what qualifies HIM to be a Priest? The POWER of the fact that you CAN’T kill Him! And even if He chooses to lay down His life, if He chooses to become dead, for your and my sin – even then, He won’t STAY dead. NOTHING could’ve held Him in that tomb! Because His is an INDESTRUCTIBLE life. And the Bible says THAT’S the kind of life that He imparts to US!

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**From God’s own *mouth* – with an oath**

**The Lord says to my Lord: “Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”**

**The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”**

**- Ps 110:1 & 4**

**This new system was established with a solemn oath. Aaron’s descendants became priests without such an oath, but there was an oath regarding Jesus. For God said to Him, “The Lord has taken an oath and will not break His vow: ‘You are a priest forever.’” Because of this oath, Jesus is the One who guarantees this better covenant with God. - Heb 7:20-22 NLT**

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**Better because this priesthood is *forever***

**There were many priests under the old system, for death prevented them from remaining in office. But because Jesus lives forever, His priesthood lasts forever. Therefore He is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through Him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf.**

**- Heb 7:23-25 NLT**

And get it guys – the point of this one is not just the time longevity of Jesus’ Priesthood. But this passage says that BECAUSE Jesus priesthood reaches FARTHER and lasts forever, He is able to save to the UTTERMOST – that’s how the old KJV says it.

**But this Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. – Heb 7:24-25 KJV**

What an incredible encouragement that should be to all of us. Jesus is able to save to the UTTERMOST. Doesn’t matter what you’ve done, how far you’ve fallen, how long you’ve been bound in sin… Jesus saves us, redeems us, cleanses us, re-creates us, down to the very last DETAIL – leaving no SHRED of our old life, our old sin, our old guilt. He saves to the UTTERMOST. Levite priests could never come CLOSE to that!

And don’t miss the very last phrase in that scripture – He saves us to the UTTERMOST – and He ever lives, at the right hand of the Father, praying for us, making intercession for us. WOW guys – I’ve asked a lot of people to pray for me over the years, but the thought that Jesus is interceding FOR me, to the Father who loved me so much from the very beginning that He sent His only Son to DIE for me – My GOODNESS – this deck is TRULY stacked in our favor!

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**Levites were priests for *Israel***

**Jesus is the Priest for the *entire* world**

The Levites made sacrifices for JEWS – offered prayers for JEWS – served JEWS. Jesus blows the cover off the whole system by becoming High Priest, not just for Jews, but for EVERYONE. This HAD to be a Melchizedek Priest. Why? Because the Bible is clear in its TIMELINE. Abraham meets Melchizedek in Gen 14 – Somewhere between 13 to 20 years BEFORE he is circumcised in Gen 17! The whole of Jesus’ Priesthood happens OUTSIDE of the Levitical order. Which leads to the next point

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**Jesus’ Priesthood makes *us* *all* priests**

**But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light - 1Pe 2:9**

The crazy thing about this is – God tried to explain this to the Jews, on the day they got to Sinai, when they first came out of Egypt.

**Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ - Ex 19:5-6a**

The entire Jewish nation misunderstood the POINT of being God’s Chosen People. It was NEVER intended to be EXCLUSIVE. It was supposed to be INCLUSIVE. Think just a second guys… The whole point of having an entire NATION of holy, royal PRIESTS is that priests bring people into relationship with GOD. If you’re a priest, then you not only come into God’s presence for yourself – but you make a way for OTHER PEOPLE to connect to God TOO! This is how Jesus priesthood is significantly superior to the Old System. And this is nothing NEW or added or unplanned. God told them the day they got to Sinai!

So as we wrap up tonight – Think about what 1Pe says you are

You’re CHOSEN

You’re ROYAL – You’re a king, you’re a queen

You're HOLY, being washed clean by the blood of Jesus Himself

You’re part of a NATION of chosen, royal priests – you’re not stuck out

here on your own, by yourself

A people created for God’s own possession – He made you cuz He WANTED you

And all this is so we can just TELL somebody

About the One who called us out of darkness

Into HIS marvelous light

Let’s stand together