

A Better Hope

THE FOUNDATION IS FINISHED. *The Holy Spirit is now starting to build the walls of His conclusions. This study is the first major conclusion the Holy Spirit has been preparing for us. He has laid the foundation that Jesus is greater than the angels, is more faithful than Moses and is better than any earthly priest. The footings are in place and the concrete has hardened. The rest of the construction material has been purchased or obtained and the walls are going up. Changes are going to occur. An old proverb says, "The only thing that is constant is change." We have all tried to motivate someone to change something in his or her life. It can be hard to motivate someone to change. Most of us do not like change. We are unwilling to change unless there is a compelling reason. The motivation can be positive or it can be for personal safety. The Spirit's purpose so far has been to motivate them to believe in Jesus. Now He is going to give them very strong reasons to do so.*

BACKGROUND. There have been two key parts to the Holy Spirit's foundation. The first was that Jesus is recognized in Psalms 110:4 as a high priest just like Melchizedek. The readers may have said to themselves, "So what?" He said that in chapter five. He gave them another warning in chapter six and then laid the final piece of the foundation.

In our last study we saw that Melchizedek was man. Scripture does not record his birth, his genealogy, or his death. This is important because the Jews accepted men as priests only if they could trace their genealogy or family heritage back to Levi. If Melchizedek is accepted by God as a priest even though he is not a Levite, then Jesus can also be a priest even though He was not from the family of Levi. He came from the family of Judah.

FIRST MAJOR CONCLUSION. With the foundation now in place, the Spirit's first major conclusion is that the Levitical priesthood was not perfect.

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? (NASB) Heb. 7:11

What is the proof the Levitical priesthood was not perfect? The answer is that God recognized another high priest who was not a Levite after the Levitical priesthood was established. Wow, what a shock this must have been to the Jewish readers! The Levitical priesthood was all they had known. They had believed it would last forever.

Have you ever been asked to do a task or a job only to discover some months or years later that someone else had been asked to do your job? Why did that happen? Maybe you had done a great job, but someone thought someone else could do your task better.

SECOND MAJOR CONCLUSION. One wall is up and one more to go. The shock is not over and the Holy Spirit drops another disappointment.

Better Hope

- Jesus -

For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also. (NASB) Heb. 7:12

This was another startling statement to the Jewish readers. Their heritage was just set aside. Since their childhood they had attended the synagogue, read the Torah, and enjoyed the Old Testament holidays. The Jewish laws, ceremonies, and synagogue were just thrown out. The priests and the sacrifices were now obsolete. The question they must have asked was, "Is this true?" If it was,

there was nothing to go back to. Instead of leaving Jesus in order to go back to Judaism, there would only be Jesus!

BETTER HIGH PRIEST. Jesus was recognized in the Psalms as a high priest even though His genealogy is traced back to Levi. He came from a different Jewish tribe.

For the one concerning whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests. And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life. For it is witnessed of Him, "THOU ART A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK." (NASB) Heb. 7:12-17

Jesus was from the tribe of Judah. No one from the tribe of Judah had ever served as a priest - served at the altar. But

the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. And inasmuch as it was not without an oath (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, 'THOU ART A PRIEST FOREVER'") . . . (NASB) Heb. 7:18-21

But that is not true about Jesus. His priesthood is given with a promise that He will continue as a high priest into the ages of eternity (the Greek word is AION). This is true because He will never die.

As a result the old Mosaic law, the old priesthood, was replaced when Jesus came. The old was replaced with something new. Something better came with the unchangeable oath - a better hope - a better covenant.

. . . so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant. And the former priests, on the one

Marks of No Hope

Some years ago a hydroelectric dam was to be built across a valley in the northeast part of the United States. There was a small town in the valley that would be submerged when the dam was finished. After the decision to build the dam and until its completion, the buildings in the town were not maintained. Instead of being a pretty little town, it became an eye sore. "Why did this happen?" The answer is that they had no hope in the future.

Jesus as a high priest from a different bloodline will. Jesus was a better high priest.

BETTER HOPE. The old Mosaic law had been given without a promise. It was useless, weak and was going to end. Its priests were sinners and mortal men who offered sacrifices for sin year after year. No one was ever made perfect. The law was given without a promise and the priests were appointed without an oath.

For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness (for

hand, existed in greater numbers, because they were prevented by death from continuing, but He, on the other hand, because He abides forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up

Himself. (NASB) Heb. 7:22-27

Jesus promises to forgive our sins if we believe or trust in Him. Because He lives He is always ready to make intercession for us - to defend us against accusations of sin. He can do this because He died for our sins. He died once for all. He does not need to die again and again, as the priest offers sacrifices again and again. He offered Himself - the perfect lamb of God (John 1:29).

BETTER FUTURE. If the readers of Hebrews went back to Judaism, they went back to second class priests and a weak law.

For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever. (NASB) Heb. 7:28

But Jesus is our priest - a better priest - who offers us a better hope - forgiveness of sins once and for all. Our sins do not need to be forgiven again and again, as in the old law. Once we truly trust in Jesus, we are truly saved - always

forgiven. He died once for total forgiveness! He offers us a better hope!

CONCLUSION. The readers of Hebrews were discouraged with Christianity. They were suffering and not regularly attending church (as we will see later). They did not have much hope for the future. So their spiritual walk was poor. They were like the folks in the town whose valley was to be flooded. They had no reason to stay. They had no reason to read God's Word, to pray, to confess their sins or do anything else. The absence of real hope in the life of a Christian results in a lukewarm faith. The marks of run down Christians - little faith, little prayer, little time in the Word, and little confession of sins - are a sign of little hope! We think we have found something better - a better high priest - not Jesus - and a better hope - the world's hope. Instead, this is a call to come back to a better walk with God realizing He offers a better high priest and a better reason to live.