Jesus is Our Permanent Priest

Hebrews 7:1-28

Key Verse: 7:25 “Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.”

Last week we studied how God’s promise is our hope and that this hope becomes an anchor for our soul, firm and secure. I asked you if you hold one promise of God in your heart. In 2:17 we learn that Jesus is the merciful and faithful high priest who became fully human in every way. In 4:14-16 the author said that Jesus is a great high priest, through whom we can approach God’s throne of grace with confidence. Then, some Jews may ask how Jesus could become a high priest because he is not a descendant of Aaron or Levi. According to Moses’ law, only the descendants of Levi could become a high priest. In today’s passage we learn how the author answers this and how he repeats the superiority of Jesus.

First, in the order of Melchizedek. (1-10) Chapter 6 ends with this statement. “*He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek*.” (6:20b) Chapter 7 starts with the story of Melchizedek. Jesus’ priesthood was established in the order of Melchizedek. This means that Jesus became our high priest as Melchizedek was. Who is Melchizedek? Look at verses 1-2a. “***This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything***.” Genesis 14 explains well about the story of Melchizedek and Abraham. There was a gulf war between four kings and five kings. At that time Abraham was involved in the war because of his nephew Lot who became a POW of the four kings. Abraham defeated the four kings and rescued Lot. When he returned, Melchizedek, a priest of God Most High, welcomed Abraham with bread and wine. Melchizedek taught Abraham that the Lord is the Creator of heaven and earth and that the victory came from the Lord. (Ge 14:18-20) Abraham accepted Melchizedek’s message and gave a tenth of all things he gained to Melchizedek. Look at verse 2b. The name Melchizedek means ‘king of righteousness.’ He is also the king of Salem, which means ‘peace.’ Melchizedek was the king of righteousness and the king of peace.

Jesus is the king of righteousness and the king of peace. The prophet Zechariah said in Zec 9:9, “*Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey*.” The gospel writer saw Jesus who entered into Jerusalem riding on a donkey as the fulfilment of this prophecy. The prophet Isaiah prophesied that Jesus is the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace. (Is 9:6). Jesus came to us as a king of righteousness and king of peace.

Still, Melchizedek is known as a mysterious person. Look at verse 3. “***Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever.***” Nobody knows where Melchizedek came from. The Scriptures say only that he is a priest of God Most High. There remains no record of his birth, family, and country. Jesus is the same as Melchizedek. People did not know where he came from. They called him Jesus of Nazareth, but they had no idea that he was born in Bethlehem. Jesus is the Son of God. He is our Everlasting Father as Isaiah said. Jesus in John 8:58, “*Very truly I tell you, before Abraham was born, I am*.” This means that Jesus is the eternal God who exists before the creation of the world.

Verses 4-10 teaches us that Melchizedek is greater than Abraham. Abraham is the father of the twelve tribes including Levites, the priestly line. People gave a tenth to Levites. The Levites gave a tenth to Abraham according to verse 9. Abraham gave a tenth of the plunder to Melchizedek. Abraham recognized Melchizedek as a priest of God Most High. Therefore, Melchizedek is greater than Abraham and Levites. Abraham was also blessed by Melchizedek. Verse 7 says, “***And without doubt the lesser is blessed by the greater***.” In the same way Jesus is greater than Abraham.

Second, by the oath of God (11-22) In these verses we learn that Jesus’ priesthood is greater than the Levitical priesthood because Jesus’ priesthood is established by the oath of God. In verse 11 the author mentioned that the Levitical priesthood was imperfect. In verses 18-19 he said, “***The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.***” The Levitical priesthood was established by Moses’ law. By the law priests came from the descendants of Levi. But the law is weak and imperfect. As we know, law can’t save us. Law can’t make us righteous. Law teaches us what is right and wrong, but can’t save us. This is the weak point of law. So, God made a new way and new type of priesthood, not from the law, but from his oath. God’s oath is God’s word of ordination. God’s oath is above the law because God made the law.

Humanly and genetically, Jesus is the descendant of Judah. According to Moses’ law the descendant of Judah cannot become a high priest. But Jesus is the great high priest. Jesus became a high priest by the oath of God, not by the law, in order of Melchizedek, not in order of Aaron. Verses 15-16 says, “***And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life***.” Jesus became a high priest by the power of indestructible God’s oath. The Scripture proves this. Psalm 110:4 says, “***The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.***” (17,21) Jesus’ priesthood is the fulfillment of Psalm 110:4.

Look at verse 22. “***Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant***.” Because God swore by himself, Jesus became the guarantee of a better covenant, a new covenant, which we’ll study in chapter 8.

Third, Jesus has a permanent priesthood. (23-28) Jesus’ priesthood is greater than any priesthood of the Levi because his priesthood is permanent. Look at verses 23-25. “***Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood***. ***Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them***.” According to Moses’ law priesthood is a lifelong term. High priests served the Lord as long as they lived. When they died, their priestly term was over with their death. But Jesus’ priesthood lasts forever because he rose again from the dead. He has a permanent priesthood because he lives forever. Because he lives forever, he is able to save forever (completely) those who come to God through him. Jesus always lives to intercede for us. Praise Jesus!

Jesus promised his disciples to be with them forever. Jesus said, “*And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*” (Mt 28:20b) Indeed, after ascending to heaven, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit in his place to be with us. Jesus was limited in time and space while he lived on this earth. But the Holy Spirit is not limited in time and space and able to be with us anytime and anyplace. Romans 8:26-27 says, “*In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God*.” Amen!

Jesus is the perfect high priest. He is different from the other high priests who were weak and imperfect in their holiness. High priests offered sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. But Jesus is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. (26-27) He truly meets our needs because he is a perfect high priest. He sacrificed for our sins not day after day or year by year, but once for all when he offered himself. (27) He made our eternal salvation once for all. Look at verse 28. “***For the law appoints as high priests in all their weakness; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.***” Amen! God made what other high priests failed possible and perfect through his Son. Praise Jesus!

Today we learn that Jesus’ priesthood was established by God’s oath which is eternal and superior to the law. There is something above and superior to the law, or regulation, or tradition, which is love. God is love. God so loved the world that he gave his One and Only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. When we love God with all our heart, soul, and strength and love our neighbors as ourselves, we fulfill God’s law. Indeed, the spirit of the law is love and the fulfillment of the law is love, too. Jesus is our merciful and faithful high priest. He is also our everlasting priest who intercedes for us forever. Amen!