

**The 1689 Confession; Chapter 8, Paragraph 5 – “Of Christ the Mediator”, Message # 17 –
“The Power of an Endless Life”, Presented in the Adult Sunday School Class,
by Pastor Paul Rendall on April 19th, 2020.**

Paragraph 5 – The Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself, which he through the eternal Spirit once offered up unto God, f) hath fully satisfied the justice of God, procured reconciliation, and purchased an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, g) for all those whom the Father hath given unto Him.

f)Hebrews 9: 14, 10: 14; Rom 3: 25-26; g)John 17: 2; Hebrews 9: 15

We have taken a look at those men in the Old Testament who were significant types of our Lord Jesus in terms of His being a Mediator and in terms of His offering sacrifices. In the case of Melchizedek, we saw that when he came to see Abraham after Abraham had defeated the kings who had captured Lot, and took away the people and the goods from the 5 kings, Melchizedek brought out bread and wine, and though he offered no sacrifice, he did perfectly picture, by presenting these elements to Abraham, that his success in the battle was all due to Christ, and indeed that all of His salvation from sin and the fulfillment of every promise that had been given to him, by God, would be through the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, who would offer Himself up as a sacrifice on the cross, so that not only Abraham, but also all of God’s elect people would be most definitely and certainly saved.

Now today I would like to take a look at the Lord Jesus Christ’s priesthood in terms of its being distinct from the Levitical priesthood, because His was the power of an endless life. So turn with me to –

Hebrews chapter 7, verses 11-28 – “Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. For He testifies: "YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK." For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. And inasmuch as He was not made priest without an oath (for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: "THE LORD HAS SWORN AND WILL NOT RELENT, 'YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK' ")), by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant. Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever.”

1. Reasons for the inadequacy of the Levitical Priesthood

There are certain reasons given here in these verses as to why the Levitical priesthood was imperfect and had eventually to be done away with, when Christ came. The first reason is that because under that Old Testament dispensation, the people of Israel, God’s covenant nation, received the law; both the ceremonial law and the moral law, but in terms of the priestly ministry, the ceremonial in particular. The

ceremonial law had much to do with the priests offering sacrifices to God which would typify the greater and absolutely perfect sacrifice of Christ, of Himself for His people's sins. It says here in verse 11, however, that if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood, what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? Aaron was a high priest. Our Lord Jesus Christ was, and is, the Great High Priest of our faith. There was indeed a great need for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek because those priests of the tribe of Levi had become an order by the law of a fleshly commandment, it says in verse 16. Now, what does this mean – the law of a fleshly commandment?

This is a good question, and the answer is that the Levitical priests were really quite unable, by their ministrations, to actually communicate to the people of the Jews that they were ministering to, the reality of spiritual blessings which their sacrifices represented. Only God Himself could do that, and the reality of the justification and sanctification of the worshiper could only take place based upon the New Testament, New Covenant work of Christ. All the salvation blessings which ever came to the people of the Jews under the Old Covenant, came by their being applied to the retroactively based upon what our Lord Jesus Christ would do when He came and fulfilled the law on our behalf. So there was a need that another Priest from another order than that of Aaron and Levi arise, according to the order of Melchizedek. The Lord Jesus would be from the tribe of Judah and not from Levi, and thus it says, of necessity, there would be a change of the law. (verse 12)

In thinking about what the law of a fleshly commandment was, we should understand that all the ministrations which took place were done by these priests by their following the strict and particular commandments which were laid out in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers concerning themselves, the tabernacle, their garments, and many other particulars. The sacrifices that were offered were fleshly sacrifices; they were beasts and birds, they were bulls, and rams, and lambs, and doves, etc. The priesthood itself was carnal because it was only continued by carnal propagation; that is, through the priests and Levites having sons who would take over ministrations from their fathers in due time in each generation. Indeed, the whole Jewish system of ordinances was carnal and typical in its significance from the beginning of its institution.

Hebrews 9: 6-10 – “Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the tabernacle, performing the services.” “But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance; the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing.” “It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience – concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.”

So, there it is...fleshly ordinances, carnal ordinances were imposed upon the Old Testament people of God, the Hebrews, until the time of the reformation came when Christ would fulfill all of these fleshly ordinances and typical observances which were ministered to that people by their priests and Levites. At that time when Christ came and fulfilled the law, there was an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, it says in verse 18 of chapter 7 of Hebrews, for the law made nothing perfect. There were many priests, it says verse 23, because they were prevented by death from continuing. And these priests were sinners themselves who needed to be redeemed and saved from their own sins. The high priest, once a year, went in alone into the tabernacle, into the second part, or the Holy of Holies, but he did not go without the blood of the lamb, which he offered for himself, and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance. And the Holy Spirit was indicating that the way into the actual Holiest place of all, into heaven, was not yet made manifest; not while the first tabernacle was still standing. All of these things were are parable, a figurative instruction, of what was coming when Christ would come and lay down His life as the ultimate fulfillment and sacrifice for our sins.

2. The Reasons that Christ's Priesthood was, and is still to this day, and will be forever, perfect in every way.

Christ's High Priestly ministry was strong and successful in terms of His offering Himself as a perfect substitutionary sacrifice for our sins, and He is presently at the right hand of the Father, continually interceding on behalf of elect sinners everywhere in all generations, because His ministry is according to the power and endless life, or an indestructible life. (verse 16, of chapter 7) And this is the case because Christ is not only a perfect Man, but He is also God made manifest in the flesh; the Son of God, who is fully God and fully Man, two natures in one blessed Person. Christ is the living God, and the Prince of life, as John 10: 18 says – "No one take My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself." "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." So this, His life, as both God and Man, is an endless one, which qualifies Him for that fulfilling of that part of His High Priestly office where He intercedes for His people and He is their Advocate with the Father. His Father has given Him as a perfect Man and Mediator, the power of an endless life, both for Himself and for all His people; and in this regard He is ever living as a priest, and the perpetuity of and the continual virtue and efficacy of His righteous life and sacrificial death goes on bestowing all spiritual blessings upon God's people, forever."

The Lord Jesus Christ did not come according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but as One sent from God the Father as the only-begotten of the Father from all eternity. And then in His Incarnation, He was born into this world to fulfill all the righteousness of God's holy law in accordance with the Scripture so that He might minister to all of God's elect people as their High Priest. In Psalm 110, verse 4, the Father declares concerning Him – "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. That same text says – "The Lord has sworn and will not relent, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.'" So Christ was not, as the priests under the law, appointed without an oath. But rather, He was sworn in to His High Priestly office with the oath of God His Father Himself. He continues forever in an unchangeable priesthood. And therefore, He is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him.

And Christ was, in His Incarnation, born into this world without sin in His nature, and so it says in verse 26 that He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. He does need daily, as those high priests of old, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's. But when He came in His earthly ministry, He offered Himself up once for all; the One who was perfect was made perfect through sufferings, and thus has been perfected forever. And as it says in Hebrews chapter 5, verse 9 – "He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, as He was called by God as High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek." And so, let us not be dull of hearing, but receive this good teaching which shows us how to preach to others the uniqueness of Christ in His perfect Person and work, the One who offers salvation freely to all now, even through our preaching and our sharing of these truths with others. Are you not thankful that Christ's was the power of an endless, indestructible life? For it is because of this that He can give you the power to live a godly and holy life, even beginning today.