



Jesus is Superior!

Series: Hebrews – An Anchor for the Soul

Hebrews 7:20-28

July 17, 2016

Pastor Eddie Strickland

-Read Passage

-Pray

-Intro: Ok, let's begin with light bulb moments and deep water. Remember this pastor's light bulb moment when he made the connection between Melchizedek and Jesus. Melchizedek's life and superiority pointed to the ultimate fulfillment of righteousness, peace, and eternity only found in Christ. He had been waiting to show Jesus to his church in this way and now we find ourselves in the middle of this great exposition of the superiority of Christ. As Pastor Nick put it, he has taken us out into the deep waters of Christ. And with the Holy Spirit's illumination as our life vest we are seeing nothing but Christ. He is superior and the only source of our salvation and He is our only hope and He is perfectly qualified to be our eternal High Priest.

-The writer has shown us how Melchizedek and his priesthood was superior to the Levitical priesthood. And he has shown us a more superior priest to Melchizedek in the person of Jesus who has become a priest not on the basis of a legal requirement but one who has the power of an indestructible life and has been appointed by God as a priest forever. Jesus is a better hope, the only hope, for drawing near to God.

-And remember the need for these Hebrew Christians to see Jesus in this light. Because of the pressures of life and the persecution that they were facing because of their faith in Christ, they were being tempted to turn away from Christ and head back to Judaism. And if so, think about the futility and the hopelessness in that. The law could not save but only reveal sin and the desperate need for a savior who they now have in Christ. The daily sacrifices could not remove that sin nor provide eternal atonement for their sin but only Christ can do that and has done it. The law could not

provide true righteousness and peace with God but only Christ. This pastor wanted these Christians to see the futility in returning to their old way of life and turning away from the only One that is life. He wanted them to see Jesus knowing that if they did they would never turn away from Him. He wants them to see Jesus as the superior Priest that is the only hope for the true life that the Old Covenant only pointed to. HE wants them to see Jesus for who He really is and enjoy life in Him.

-So he continues in his exposition of Jesus and shows us in this passage the superiority of Jesus and His priesthood and he will highlight that superiority in three ways. He will show us that Jesus' priesthood was with an oath, and is permanent, and is based on the nature and character of who Jesus is. And in the process he shows us some glorious things about Christ. He really wants to show them Christ and for them to know that Christ is the better hope. And we need to know that as well. So let's get to it.

1 – Superior by an Oath (20-22)

- "And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever.' " This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant." (Hebrews 7:20–22, ESV)

-Here the writer refers again to Psalm 110:4 where God makes an oath that the Messiah will be a priest forever. We all know that Jesus is the fulfillment of this because He is the Messiah that was to come. So what's so important about an oath and what's the contrast here?

-The writer of Hebrews has mentioned God making an oath before in chapter 6. In making His promise to Abraham that He would bless him and multiply him, God swore by Himself that He would really fulfill His promise. God didn't have to do this---His word is enough. But God made this oath not for Himself but for depraved sinners and their doubt and unbelief. God's oath is an assurance to fallen sinners like us that His Word will come to pass. Whatever God says and confirms by an oath becomes

something that is so utterly unchangeable that it becomes intertwined and part of the fiber of the universe and it must come to pass and it remains forever. This was true of God's promise of salvation to Abraham, which Christ fulfilled, and it is true of God's appointment of Jesus as the one true High Priest. And the author of Hebrews wants his hearers to know that that can take it to the bank that Jesus is a priest forever because His appointment as eternal priest is secured by God's oath.

-And this is unlike anything they are familiar with. The Levitical priests that these Hebrews would have been familiar with were not made a priest by oath but by law. God instructed the induction of priests.

- "*Then bring near to you Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the people of Israel, to serve me as priests—Aaron and Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar.*" (Exodus 28:1, ESV)

-God gave Moses instruction on who would serve as priests but He did not swear to Aaron that his priesthood would be forever. God never suggested anywhere in Scripture that the priesthood of Aaron would be anything other than temporary. In fact the Levitical priesthood could only point to Christ who would be the ultimate fulfillment of a godly priesthood.

-So what we see in this contrast here is that the difference between Jesus and the Levitical priests is not one of being lesser or greater in degree but Jesus' priesthood is totally different in kind. What the pastor wants this church to see is that Jesus is the final priest that will serve for eternity and in Him they can find hope because He lives and serves forever in that role. The author goes on to give us the glorious result of this truth.

-Result---Jesus is the guarantor of a better covenant. This makes sense right? The covenant that God made through Jesus (the New Covenant of salvation) is better than the old one because the old one was temporary and the new one is eternal. The old covenant wasn't bad but it was a good God-given covenant that served its purpose but

it was incomplete. It pointed to the one that would bring completion as it pointed to Christ. The old covenant was good but the new is better.

-The New Covenant--- " *Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.*"
(Ezekiel 36:22–28, ESV)

-This is the New Covenant of salvation. This is what God has promised through Abraham to bless His people with saving grace. This is what God has done through Christ. Jesus said with the cup of the Lord's Supper that this was the New Covenant in His blood that was shed for many for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus is the guarantor of this salvation of grace. You see this in the meaning of the word.

-Guarantor---one who guarantees the reality of something. The word used here is a legal term that was commonly used in Hellenistic Greek of a surety who assumed responsibility for another person's debt if they could not pay it. It's easy to see how Christ fulfilled God's plan of salvation and how He guarantees it eternally. As sinners, we owe a debt to God that we cannot pay and because of our sin and our inability to pay we deserve death and hell. We couldn't pay and thus, couldn't save ourselves nor did we want to. But Christ fulfilled this New Covenant by paying all of the penalty for our sin. What we couldn't pay He did and so ransomed us and justified us before God and reconciled us so that we are now at peace with God with our debt having been

nailed to the cross. And Christ guarantees that all of our debt, our sins, that we have incurred or will (past, present and future) is paid by Him.

-No one is qualified to be the guarantor of the New Covenant of salvation but Jesus and He guarantees it for all of eternity. If you are in Christ then no one can snatch you out of His hand and He promises that He will raise you up on the last day. Nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ and He will bring to completion what has been started in you! Jesus Christ is our Savior and Lord forever and salvation in Him is eternally effective! And this pastor wants his people to know the assurance and secure hope that they have in Christ and their salvation is real and secure because the covenant that promises it is secured by the One whose position as High Priest is assured by God's oath.

2 – Superior by Permanence (23-25)

- "The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them." (Hebrews 7:23–25, ESV)

-The argument here is simple. The Levitical priests were many in number and it's easy to understand why---they were mortal and they died and had to be succeeded. The Aaronic priests were appointed based on ancestry as we have seen but none of them could serve forever. When Aaron died his son Eleazar succeeded him. After Eleazar died his son Phinehas succeeded him and so on and on the succession went until 70 AD when the temple was destroyed. The concluding comment on any Aaronic priest was that he died. There was no such thing as a permanent priesthood because these guys died.

-But by contrast, Christ remains. He doesn't remain or continue to exist because He is a priest but He is a priest forever because He remains or continues forever. The Levites were mortal men but Christ is eternal and continues in the role of High Priest forever because of it. His priesthood is unchangeable and non-transferable because Christ remains forever and never changes. His priesthood is not capable of anything but permanence and by it's very divine nature can never conclude, weaken, or ever be ineffective. He is our High Priest forever.

-Result---He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God since He always lives to make intercession for them!

-This **word for uttermost** can carry two meanings. It can mean forever in time, always and forever and for all eternity. This would mean that one would be saved forever. It can also mean a sense of completeness. This would mean that one who was saved would be saved completely, totally and entirely with no degree of incompleteness. Now a lot of guys want to debate this to be one or the other. But it's both and both find their fulfillment in the salvation of Christ. Because Christ is eternal and lives forever and is a priest forever He saves us completely and forever.

-And He does this. We don't add anything to our salvation---Christ saves us completely by His grace and His finished work on the cross. Man does a disservice to the gospel when we even begin to think that man has anything to add or contribute to it. And because Christ is eternal and saves completely, salvation in Him is forever and eternal. We can no longer keep ourselves saved as we can save ourselves. We can't earn merit and acceptance to be saved and we can't work enough to stay saved. No matter what we have done and how great our sin, Christ can save us to the uttermost completely and forever!!

-And this is not just to the great initial experience of being saved but it refers to the perpetual experience of being saved. Because Christ lives forever and His salvation is forever, it is His work that brings about our growing sanctification and growth in Him and being made more like Him. And He saves in this way as **He always lives to make intercession** for those who draw near. Oh what a comfort this should be to us. Our physical and mental and spiritual weaknesses are in desperate need of Christ's

intercession. I grow weary in doing good, I grow weary in serving and praying. My mind wanders and I get distracted and caught up in business. But not Christ. His communion with the Father is unbroken and His intercession is never ending. Paul wrote of this.

- "*Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.*" (Romans 8:34, ESV)

-Minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day, year by year and millennium by millennium, Christ prays for us. Though we are finite He is infinite, though we are temporal He is eternal and He is eternally active in His ministry on our behalf. He has the power to keep us and HE does. Think about this. Jesus Christ is praying for you right now. He is praying for our growth and unity. He is praying for us right now as I speak in the same way that He prayed in His high priestly prayer in John 17. He intercedes for us in an understanding way because He has firsthand experience of our trials. He intercedes for us compassionately because He knows exactly what we need. And He intercedes for us effectively because He has the power to meet our need. And His prayers are effective to cover anything and everything that would prevent us from receiving the final salvation that He has secured for us on the cross! REST and BE ASSURED in that beloved. Christ is perfectly qualified to be our High Priest because He is superior.

3 – Superior by Character (26-27)

- "*For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.*" (Hebrews 7:26–27, ESV)

-Christ's priesthood is superior because of God's oath and because it is permanent. But the writer goes on to give us one more proof. Jesus's priesthood is superior because of

who Jesus is---because of His nature and His character. **It is fitting** or appropriate and proper that our High Priest is perfectly qualified. And what follows is a glorious description of the character of Christ.

-He is:

-Holy---holy signifies devout, pious and set apart and pleasing to God. He is divine in contrast to what is human. He is uniquely God's holy One and He stands set apart unto God and wholly acceptable before God in His essence.

-Innocent---Christ is blameless and without guilt or fault. He was marked by integrity and untouched by evil.

-Unstained---there is absolutely no moral defilement in Jesus. He was without sin and there is no darkness that abides in Him. He has no moral or spiritual blemish. Think about this for a minute. Christ spent 33 years in this world mingling with sinners and being tempted by Satan and yet was without sin and we can't even go a day. Our heavenly High Priest is marked by spiritual and moral perfection. So it's not surprising that he was...

-Separated from sinners---He was qualitatively separated in the sense that even though He was among sinners He was set apart and different from them. He had no sinful nature and He didn't succumb to Satan or temptation and was without sin. He was totally given over to submitting to and fulfilling God's will and in no sense ever compromised God's plan even though He was in constant contact with sinners. He was also separated from sinners spatially in that he was...

-Exalted above the heavens---And after humbling Himself and taking the form of man and being obedient to death on a cross He now lives an exalted life having passed through the heavens and is now seated at the right hand of God. The writer of Hebrews has already addressed this amazing truth in chapter 4.

- *"Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."* (Hebrews 4:14–16, ESV)

-As compared to sinners like us in our weakness and sin, we see here that Christ is our glorious High Priest and not just in the past but now and in the future.

-And because of His character He had **no need to offer sacrifices for Himself**. Unlike the Levitical priests, He did not make an offering for Himself but He made an offering of Himself for us in our place. Unlike the Levitical priests and us, Christ was sinless.

-What this means is that because of His nature, essence and character, He was the perfect sacrifice that was needed to atone for sin. Jesus was not only the perfect priest but He was the perfect sacrifice. The perfection of the sacrifice is due to the perfection of the person sacrificed. And Christ did this once and for all. No more daily sacrifices over and over and over but the final, perfect sacrifice has been made by Christ willingly laying down His perfect, sinless life for the forgiveness of sins once and for all. And once for all doesn't just mean that it happened on one occasion but also that it was unrepeatable and definite and unshakeable and that it for all time secured an eternal redemption that we desperately need. And this means for us that we can trust Jesus as our High Priest because He has perfectly represented us to God and represents God to us.

4 – Trust Jesus as High Priest (28)

- “For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.” (Hebrews 7:28, ESV)

-The law appointed the priests from the tribe of Levi. And those appointed were weak, mortal men who were sinners. They were not perfect and their appointment was not with an oath of eternity. But oh the contrast to Christ and His priesthood. His appointment came by word of the oath of God. And God has appointed a Son, His only Son, as our High Priest forever because He has been made perfect forever.

-Beloved, how dare we go to anyone or anything else with our needs? Christ is alive forever more and even right now is interceding for us as our better hope and the guarantor of our salvation. He is the Son of God, the radiance of His glory and that exact imprint of His nature. He is the one who has provided purification for our sins and is our only source of salvation and thus, is the sure anchor for our soul. He lives forever and is our High Priest forever and is able to save us to the uttermost. He is perfectly qualified to carry out this ministry on our behalf and we need to trust Him beloved. The outcome for us is eternal---it was fitting that we should have such a High Priest. Hallelujah! Amen!

-Either we are children of God or we are not. Either Christ is sufficient for us or He is not. AND HE IS!!!

Application:

1 – Trust Gods’ Word---every word is true and it will come to pass.

- "Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,' calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it." (Isaiah 46:8–11, ESV)

-Every word of God proves true beloved. And God's Word is completely trustworthy. He does not change---He is not fickle. Our eternal salvation does not depend on our changeable feelings or our wavering experiences. We can put all of our confidence and trust in God and His Word. Do we believe that? Do we believe that His promises and His word is for me? Do I cling to those promises?

-When our life and circumstance on this earth is crumbling and horrific we can stand on the promises of God's Word. When our health is crumbling we can cling to the promises of God. When life gets hard and persecution may come our way we can stand in obedience on the commands of God even if we have to stand alone. When we trust God's Word we can have true joy and true peace no matter the circumstances or consequences or the storm. Our circumstances may never get better but we can have the peace and joy that only comes in knowing Christ. We belong to a kingdom that cannot be shaken. We belong to God who will not let go of us. And in times of doubt and uncertainty we are urged by this pastor simply to take God at His word and trust. He has sworn on oath that His Son is our priest forever! And that leads to our second point of application.

2 – Trust Christ and His Sacrifice

-There is no possible way to exhaust the wonders of the cross. There is no end to its depth where once and for all Christ died for us. If you trust Christ's finished work on the cross and His resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father then you are saved beloved. And it is not just a thing of our spiritual past. Salvation is past,

present and a future thing. It is a present and immediate thing as well as we grow in Christ. It is a future thing as we look to Him to return and bring us to glorification. We have been saved, are being saved and we shall be saved in Christ. And Christ is always able to keep safe all those who draw near to Him. Day by day, moment by moment, Christ rescues His people. And we must constantly renew our trust in Him knowing that He will never fail us.

-What about you today?

-Believer---are you trusting in Him today as much as you did when you were saved? Are you pursuing Him today in desperation knowing that apart from Him we are nothing? Are you eagerly awaiting His return to see Him face to face? Are you really resting in Him today---right now? If not, run to Him beloved. His hands are wide open as He intercedes for you!

-Unbeliever---His hands are open for you too. Run to Him, Come to Him and He promises that He will not cast you out. Repent and believe in His saving work and He will be your High Priest as well. He is the only source of true, eternal salvation and joy and peace and hope. Cast yourself on His grace today!

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