

SUPER NIKE PEOPLE
Hebrews 7:11-17
Hebrews 11.7

TEXT: HEBREWS 7:11-17

*11 **Now if perfection had been attainable** through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron?*

12 For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well.

13 For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar.

*14 For it is evident that our Lord was **descended from Judah**, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.*

15 This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek,

16 who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life.

17 For it is witnessed of him, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."

JESUS IS A HIGH PRIEST APART FROM THE LAW OF MOSES

The Law of Moses was the rule of life for all the Jews from his time forward. This law was administered by the sons of Levi –one of which was Aaron.

God was very serious about this law. One time a king of Israel, named Saul, was instructed by God to wait for the priest to come and offer a sacrifice. He didn't wait and offered it himself.

Jesus is from the tribe of Judah, not Levi.

He could not be a priest. He was forbidden from being a priest in Israel. Israel had thousands of priests and Jesus wasn't one of them!

From the tribe of Judah there was only one prescribed job available, and that was king, but by the time of Jesus, Israel had not ruled itself for 600 years. They had had no king.

If Israel were to coronate a king for itself, Jesus, as a member of the tribe of Judah, was eligible. But a priest, no. Of course, His followers understood these things. They knew that Jesus was from the tribe of Judah, from the family of David. This added to their belief that He must be Messiah, for He was also qualified to be the King! But they never thought of Him as a priest.

And, according to the Law of Moses, He wasn't a priest. He knew this too. As an obedient Son, He would not have gone into the holy of holies in the Temple, for He would not break the Law. He always kept the Law. Only a Levite could be a priest.

But it was no loss, because the Law had a great weakness:

PERFECTION WAS NOT ATTAINABLE THROUGH THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD (THE LAW)

In other words, no person could be holy, righteous, perfect, without sin, by the Law of Moses and the work of the priest. The word “perfect” in our text refers to a completed product, a finished end. The worshipers who came to the priests hoped to be done with sin, to be forgiven, to put it behind them, to be cleansed, to never sin again.

The priests worked through the years of their lives offering sacrifices for devout Jews who wanted their sins forgiven. And then they retired, and other priests would take their place and do the same thing. But the devout Jews were still sinning, still not perfect, and still not complete before God.

Jesus had no interest in being a priest of Levi. He had a specific goal for His life and being a priest of Levi would never achieve His goal.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (Joh 3:17 ESV)

His goal was to save the world, not to condemn it. He could not save the world by offering animal after animal for the sins of devout Jews. The blood of goats and bulls was not sufficient to forgive the sins of human beings, made in the image of God. Therefore, working as a priest according to the Law would accomplish nothing. He did not come to waste His time. He came that the world would be saved “through Him.”

He states His goal in another way in Matthew:

*It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as **the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.**” (Mat 20:26-28 ESV)*

He did not come to offer the blood of animals in the temple. He came to save the world by “giving his life.” He didn’t come to offer an animal for sins, but He came to offer Himself for sins. The Levitical priesthood could do nothing on this matter.

What priest could offer Jesus to God? No son of Aaron or Levi could offer Jesus, a man, on the altar. None was worthy and it would be against the Law of Moses.

Only a High Priest who was worthy could offer Jesus for sin. He offered Himself.

*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.** (Heb 7:27 ESV)*

Jesus offered Himself. He was the priest and the offering, but He was not a priest of Levi. He was of a greater priesthood. He was of an order of priest that was more ancient, it was eternal. Look again at our text and see this point:

17 For it is witnessed of him, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."

The priesthood of Levi was too weak a thing to offer Jesus as a ransom for mankind. Therefore, the priesthood of Levi could never bring forgiveness of sins, and could never make one perfect. But the priesthood of Melchizedek, the priestly service of Jesus Himself, offering Himself as a perfect sacrifice, is enough to bring forgiveness of sins to the world, and to make a person holy and perfect.

Faith in Jesus will one day make us perfect, complete –even as we are forgiven of sins before Him now.

One of the truths we must understand in order to move on to maturity in Christ is the truth that we are are forgiven, that our destiny in Jesus is sure, but that we must live by faith in this fallen world until the perfect comes fully with the return of Jesus.

How can it be that I am forgiven if I feel so dirty and condemned? How is it that Jesus has overcome the grave if I feel so sick and weak? How can it be that evil is defeated if I feel I must wrestle with it every day?

Victory is ours, but we must fight the battle now anyway.

Look how John explains the Christian life:

2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. (1Jo 3:2 ESV)

And look how Paul puts it:

For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. . . . For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. (1Co 13:9,10,12 ESV)

And again, he says:

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. (Phi 3:20-21 ESV)

The day will come when we will be made complete, perfect in all ways. Right now, our justification is perfect. Our sins have been paid for by the offering of Jesus as a sacrifice; offered by the priest, Jesus.

The offerings of the priest of Levi do not have this power. They are repeated over and over again and the sinner is not changed. His sin is not forgiven, and his destiny in Heaven is not made sure.

So Jesus was not a priest of Levi. He was a priest who was greater than all the Jewish priests combined. He offered Himself one time, and that was enough. Through Him we have perfection. We have victory.

APPLICATION

If this is true, what should we do? We should set our minds on the goal in front of us, the return of Christ. As Peter puts it:

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1Pe 1:13 ESV)

Champions come by way of confidence. When Michael Jordan was in his prime, when he got to the playoffs, we all knew the Bulls would win the championship. Like no one else in the last 50 years of sports, when Michael Jordan set his mind toward the task, he carried his team to six championships. He had confidence, and his teammates did too, because of him, because of what he had done and they had done with him through the years.

But he still had to play the games. In 91, 92, 93 the Bulls won it all. In the 93 playoffs, no one expected the Bulls to lose. And they didn't. But they still had to lace up their shoes and play. And they didn't play like it was owed to them – they played like it mattered, every time.

Peter says, "Prepare your minds for action...set your hope on fully on the grace that will be brought to you..." when Jesus returns. He is saying, "You know that you will win this. Jesus has done the heavy lifting. When He returns, you will be made perfect. With this in mind, set your mind on action, and make it go."

The main need for most Christians is an attitude adjustment. Most like the idea of grace, of Jesus saving us, but they don't want to work. They want to be lazy. They want to whine every time they get a pain. They want to give a little bit of their time, their money, and their effort and say, "That ought to be enough." Any set back, any distraction takes them away from the task of following Jesus with all their might.

Why is it that Christians who have the victory of the resurrection guaranteed to them, play the game of life as if they are going to lose? Michael Jordan played basketball with more confidence than most Christians live their lives before God.

Michael Jordan said,

"I've missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times, I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."

He approaches basketball in the way Christians need to approach life. If he was going to lose, you had to beat him because he was giving you his all. I wish he'd get saved and become a preacher, so that he could speak to God's people instead of just men playing games when he says things like:

“I can accept failure, everyone fails at something. But I can't accept not trying.”

Or

“You must expect great things of yourself before you can do them.”

Or

“I've never lost a game. I just ran out of time.”

Christian, I am hopeful for better things for you than is the norm for most Christians. The Bible teaches us to take an attitude of victory, not victimhood. We are weak, yes, but we are conquerors. We win.

As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.(Rom 8:36-37 ESV)

Jesus Christ, your High Priest, has done what is necessary to make you perfect, greater than all this world. Don't waste your life. Get up and get your game on. Run hard for Jesus, work for Him every day.