

# Hebrews

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Hebrews 7:11-22 – The Law Teaches, Jesus Perfects

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## I. Begin With An Explanation of **Hebrews 7:11-22**

### A. Prayer

B. **Hebrews 7:11** . . . 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?

1. Perfection in this case speaks of being in that **positional** and **practical** condition whereby we are considered worthy to enter the presence of God and remain in His presence.
2. If this kind of **positional** and **practical** perfection came through the Law and the Levitical Priesthood, there would be no need for Jesus.

C. **Hebrews 7:12** . . . For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also.

1. The Levitical Priesthood was established by the Law that God gave to Moses. The High Priest requirements (lineage, clothing, blood sacrifice, and ceremony) were established by this same Law.
2. To change the Priesthood – including the High Priest (for he is the one who entered God's presence) the first Law had to be replaced by a new Law.

D. **Hebrews 7:13-14** . . . For the one concerning whom these things are spoken (**Jesus**) belongs to another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar. [14] For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests.

1. Under the Mosaic Law, you had to be from the tribe of Levi to be a priest. To be a High Priest, you had to be from the tribe of Levi and a descendant of Aaron.
2. Jesus was neither, yet God proclaimed him a Priest forever.

E. **Hebrews 7:15-17** . . . And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, [16] who has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the

power of an indestructible life. [17] For it is attested of Him, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

1. Again, under the Law, a Priest was a priest because of lineage.
2. Christ became a Priest because (1) God made him a Priest and because (2) he is perfect and eternal (an indestructible life).

F. **Hebrews 7:18-19** . . . For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness [19] (for 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.

1. The reason for this change in Law and Priesthood is because the Law could not make anyone perfect. It could not put anyone in that **positional** and **practical** condition whereby they would be considered worthy to enter into and remain in the presence of God. In this sense the Law is weak and useless.
2. However, Christ is able to put us in that positional and practical condition whereby we are considered worthy to enter into and remain in the presence of God. Therefore, Christ provides a better hope or expectation for those who want to walk with God forever.

G. **Hebrews 7:20-22** . . . And inasmuch as it was not without an oath [21] (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, 'You are a priest forever' "); [22] so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

1. The Levitical Priests were made priests by Law alone. Jesus was made a Priest, forever, by Law (the declared will of God) and by an oath from God that Jesus would be a Priest forever.
2. As a guarantee of a better covenant, we see from Hebrews that Jesus was superior to the Law and to the Levitical Priests for three reasons:
  - a. **First**, His innocence in relation to sin. Jesus was sinless. He was holy just as God is holy, and he was perfect just as God is perfect. This innocence in relation to sin enables Jesus to present both an acceptable and an eternal sacrifice to God for our sin so that we who repent and believe can be considered positionally worthy of entering into and remaining in the presence of God.
  - b. **Second**, the eternal and indestructible nature of his being enables him to endlessly stand before God on our behalf and

intercede for us – if and when we sin after repenting and trusting in Christ for salvation.

- c. **Third**, he is able to make us perfect in our standing before God (imputed righteousness or justification), and he is able to make us mature or complete (perfect) in the way we live each day so that we can be considered worthy – on both a positional and practical level – to enter into and remain in the presence of God.
- 3. **Summary** – Jesus became one of us and yet he remained both sinless and eternal. Therefore, he is able to secure our standing before God (**positional righteousness**) and to empower us and teach us to live as he lived (**practical righteousness**) so that we can enter into daily and intimate fellowship with God throughout eternity. It is for this reason that he has become a guarantee of a better covenant.

## II. Why Is Perfection So Important?

- A. As God contrasts the Law and Christ in this portion of Hebrews, He does so in the context of perfection – with the implication that perfection is very important. Why? Before answering that specifically, I want to remind us of something I just finished saying in the explanation of these verses, and have been saying to us for some time as we have considered God’s message to us found here in Hebrews.
- B. The perfection spoken of here is more than the perfection that is known as **imputed or positional righteousness**. It includes practical perfection as well.
  - 1. **Why do I say this?** Because it is true. **How do I support this?** Two ways.
    - a. **First**, look at the Law. The Law, first and foremost, teaches us how to live day to day – whether it is the moral parts of the Law or the ceremonial parts. And for the sake of those who fall short of that perfection, the Law provides a remedy through the Priests and Temple in the form of sacrifices, repentance, broken-heartedness, and cleansing rituals.
    - b. **Second**, look at the rest of scripture – and especially the NT. In the rest of scripture, God provides us with enough statements to convince us practical perfection is as important as positional perfection. To further make my point, let me give you just two scriptures:

- (1) **Hebrews 12:14** . . . Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.
    - (2) **I John 3:9** . . . No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.
  2. Now we might ask, why does God unite positional perfection with practical perfection? Because both are needed to be considered worthy to enter into and remain in the presence of God.
    - a. Now without question, **positional perfection** must be perfectly perfect to have its intended affect on us (*making it possible for us to enter into and remain in God's presence*).
    - b. And though we know of no one other than Jesus Christ who has risen to the heights of **practical perfection** in this life, it must be our settled and determined pursuit to the end of our days if it is to have its intended affect – that is, the affect of completing our positional perfection so that we can be considered worthy to enter into and remain in the presence of God.
  3. Now, let me be clear about this. Just as **practical perfection** is of no value without **positional perfection** (*we have no hope of earning our salvation through any amount of efforts to be good*), so **positional perfection** is of no value without an honest, sincere, determined, and persistent pursuit of **practical perfection**. We cannot go from being rebels against God to being reconciled to God while continuing to knowingly and deliberately rebel against Him – even if our acts of deliberate and repeated rebellion are seemingly small or socially acceptable or even well hidden.
- C. And so again we come back to my question. Why is (**positional** and **practical**) perfection so important?
1. It is the only way we can be considered worthy to enter into and remain in the presence of God, today and throughout eternity.
  2. But, you say, what about the grace of God? What about the forgiveness and mercy of God? What about salvation by faith – alone? What about that Bible passage that speaks of our works as filthy rags? What about **Romans 6:23** . . . For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- D. And I say to you – consider **HIV** – the Human Immunodeficiency Virus that leads to AIDS.
1. How much of this virus do you want in your body?
  2. Now you may be thinking, that's a stupid question. Why? Because **HIV** is an enemy of your body whose sole intent is to destroy your immune system so it can take over and destroy your body.
  3. Yet there are hundreds and even thousands of people who are willing to engage in behavior that puts them at great risk of letting in just a little tiny bit of the virus. Why? Solely for the gratification of some pressing need.
  4. Do you think that people like that are wise? NO!! WHY? Because even in the smallest amounts the virus is your enemy and though it may take years to accomplish its intent of destroying you, it will continue growing and fighting until it has fulfilled its purpose.
- E. In the Kingdom of God, and in you and I, sin, unrighteousness, ungodliness, self-rule, and rebellion against God are like HIV. Let the littlest amount in and it will continue to grow until it wins the war and destroys whatever it is in. Consider:
1. To most people, Adam and Eve's sin seems minor by comparison to the horrendous and heinous evils committed in Sodom and Gomorrah and in our world today.
  2. Yet look what great destruction has been wrought from that first, seemingly minor act of rebellion. Yet it separated God and man then and it separates God and man now.
- F. Now you may be thinking that what I am talking about is nice, but not very realistic. After all, who is perfect? The obvious answer is no one, and no one can be perfect in this life.
1. But let me ask you this question. Who is the perfect student? Yet we all can spot the difference between those who give a good, earnest, persistent, and sincere effort at being the best student they can be – and those who don't put forth that kind of effort.
  2. What is my point? Those who have received **positional perfection** through saving faith may never reach **practical perfection** in this life, but only the fool believes he can be considered worthy to enter into and remain in the presence of God without making a good, earnest, persistent, and sincere effort to reach practical perfection in this life.

3. And even if you can contain or hid your sin so as to live a culturally acceptable Christian life, only a fool believes he can contain or hid it and still enjoy the kind of fellowship and intimacy with God granted to those who take the pursuit of practical perfection seriously.

### III. Conclusion

- A. So once again I ask, why perfection? It is the only way to be in the condition – both in standing before God and in practice of life to be considered worthy to enter into and remain in the presence of God.
- B. Next week we will look at why the Law cannot bring us to perfection and why Jesus can.