

LIFE Bible Study: Hebrews 7:11-28

For Discussion: What experiences have you had with keeping something past its usefulness/lifespan and trying to use it later? What was the result of using it beyond its intended time?

Read Hebrews 7:11-28

For review: In Hebrews 7:1-10, the author began a line of argument in which he referenced Genesis 14:18-20 to compare Abraham and Melchizedek, showing that Melchizedek was the greater of the two. This superiority of Melchizedek would have far-reaching implications for the people of God. With more of God's plan revealed through history, it can be seen that the comparison pertained to more than two individuals, but to two orders of priests, the order of Melchizedek and the order of Aaron (Abraham's descendant). In the following section, the author turns to the only other passage to mention Melchizedek, Psalm 110:4, to continue his argument, further developing previously established themes to show how they are fulfilled in Christ and why a new priesthood wasn't simply an option but a necessity.

The author suddenly transitions from his discussion of Abraham and Melchizedek with a rhetorical question expressing the need for another priest from a different priesthood. What reason does he give for this need? Why is this deficiency of the existing priesthood of such importance (Heb. 12:14)?

What contrasts does the author make between the Levitical priests and Jesus (the priest of the order of Melchizedek), and how is Jesus' priesthood superior to theirs? The author lists several qualities of Jesus that surpass the shortcomings of the Levitical priests and make Him uniquely able to meet our needs (v.26). Why is it fitting that our great high priest have these qualities?

How can the law, which was given by God for the good of Israel, rightly be called weak and useless elsewhere in His Word (Rom. 8:3-4)? What was the value of people's adherence to it before the time of Christ (Deut. 10:12; Gal. 3:15-26)?

What are some qualities the world promotes as a means to salvation and/or significance? In what ways do these fall short of what they promise? It wasn't only for our preservation that Christ sacrificed Himself and now intercedes as our high priest, it was for our perfection. If this is the extent to which God will go to purify us, how ought we to be seeking and looking forward to fully attaining this perfection in our lives?

Reflection and application

Amid the trials experienced by the recipients of the author's letter, there was a need for them to endure in their faith and not return to the systems of the past. The Mosaic law and its associated priesthood had no power to change hearts, it failed to draw people to God, and left them continuing to fall short of His glory. The very mention of a priest from another priesthood hundreds of years after the establishment of the first implied the need for him. The appearance of such a priest for a second time in history confirmed this and revealed God's hand at work to supply that need.

What the law failed to do to make us acceptable before God, Jesus did as both the offeror and offering. He was not destroyed by His sacrifice like the animals offered in the past, His life was revealed to be indestructible, and He now intercedes for us before God. Having tasted God's salvation, we like the first readers of Hebrews would only stand to lose in turning back to the notions of the past that have no power to save and were never intended to bring about lasting transformation. Draw near to God in thanksgiving for our eternal guarantor of the better covenant, seeking from Him endurance to look ahead and an ever-growing desire for His perfection to be made manifest in your life.