

The Priesthood According to the Order of Melchizedek

Description

The Priesthood According to the Order of Melchizedek

A study related to the SDA
Sabbath School Lesson for 2021, 4th Quarter
Present Truth In Deuteronomy
Week 6
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This week's lesson is entitled, 'For What Nation is There So Great?' It discusses God's system of statutes and judgments and their cause and effect relationship with the greatness of Israel. The idea is that if Israel obeyed God's laws, which are so full of wisdom and right principle, they would develop a character of true greatness and thus be God's representatives. They were to be a kingdom of priests (Ex. 19:6) ministering God's salvation to the world.

So today we'd like to discuss God's system of laws that are designed to turn us into a kingdom of priests, working under the direction of Christ in the Heavenly sanctuary, to finish the work of salvation for the world.

To understand this system, we need to see what Scripture has to say about the relationship between the priesthood before Christ, and the priesthood that Christ himself established. One of the most important texts on this point is Hebrews 7:11-12. It reads,

11 Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest [Jesus] should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? 12 For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. 13 For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. – Hebrews 7:11-12

Ah, here we have some information concerning a change of the law! The reason given? The priesthood was changed from the Levitical priesthood to a priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek! Notice verse 13 tells us that Jesus was not from the priestly tribe of Levi, but from the tribe of Judah, so of course, Jesus could not be a priest in the Levitical priesthood! But even more than that, we can see in verse 11 that perfection was not coming through the Levitical priesthood, and, for that reason, its time was up!

We can also see evidence of this problem before the cross. Let's read sections of Malachi 2, It reads,

1?And now, O priests, this commandment is for you.
2 If you will not hear,
And if you will not take it to heart,
To give glory to My name,”
Says the Lord of hosts,
“I will send a curse upon you...
3Behold, I will rebuke your descendants...
4 Then you shall know that I have sent this commandment to you,
That My covenant with Levi may continue,”
Says the Lord of hosts. ...
8?But you have departed from the way;
You have caused many to stumble at the law.
You have corrupted the covenant of Levi,”
Says the Lord of hosts. ...
9 “Therefore I also have made you contemptible and base
Before all the people,
Because you have not kept My ways
But have shown partiality in the law.” -Malachi 2:1-4,8,9

Here we can see that God's covenant with Levi was corrupted by the Levitical priests. And unfortunately, the priesthood did not respond to Malachi's call to repentance; it continued in its corruption. It could not bring the people to righteousness. At the time Christ sat down at the right hand of God, the Levitical priesthood was taken away, and a new priesthood was instituted. The priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek commenced – this was the priesthood to which Jesus was anointed High Priest.

This priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek was promised back in Psalm 110:1-5 which reads,

1The Lord said to my Lord,
“Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”
2 The Lord shall send the rod [or scepter] of Your strength out of Zion.
Rule in the midst of Your enemies! ...
4 The Lord has sworn
And will not relent,
“You [Jesus] are a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek.”
5The Lord is at Your right hand;
He shall execute kings in the day of His wrath. -Psalm 110:1-5

Here we can see that this priesthood belongs to the one who will sit at God's right hand, and that He will rule from Zion, which is the place from which the kings of Judah ruled. Likewise, he will rule with a rod or scepter and gain victories over his enemies. This language is similar to Jacob's blessing of Judah found in Gen. 49:8-10. Additionally, Melchizedek was not only a priest, but also

a king – the king of Salem (Jerusalem) (see Genesis 14:18). This demonstrates that Psalm 110 itself pictures the one who is sworn into the priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek as being a kingly Judahite figure.

Interestingly, as a side note, the Levitical priesthood had been a change from a former priesthood also. Numbers 3:11-12 reads,

Then the LORD spoke to Moses: “Look, I myself have taken the Levites from among the Israelites instead of every firstborn who opens the womb among the Israelites. So the Levites belong to me...” – Numbers 3:11-12

So, to the Hebrews, the whole concept of a change in the priesthood was not without precedent. Additionally, as was shown in Psalm 110, the priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek was indeed prophesied back in the time of David. Jesus fit the bill for this prophesied priesthood, not only because he was from the tribe of Judah, but because he was to minister in the true sanctuary, the heavenly sanctuary (Psalm 110:1 and Hebrews 8:2), and because he had an indestructible life (Heb. 7:16) and righteousness. “Melchizedek” in Hebrew means “king of righteousness,”

Righteousness is required for entrance into the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek... A priest in the new priesthood is a righteous minister of the word. This is the priesthood we are called to (See Romans 15:15-16, 1 Peter 2:5, Revelation 1:6 and 5:10).

Now, since this is a priesthood of righteousness, it cannot also be a lawbreaking priesthood!

Jesus taught that we ought to obey all the laws given through Moses. This is demonstrated by his sayings recorded in Matt. 5:18, John 5:46; and 7:19, among others.

But Hebrews 7:11-12 says there was a change in the law, because of the change in the priesthood – which shows us that the portion of the law that applies to the priesthood has been changed – changed out of necessity.

“Instead of priesthood being determined by lineage, it is by the power of indestructible life. Instead of the sacrifices of the blood of bulls and goats, we have the sacrifices of the blood of the Messiah (Heb. 8:3; 9:23) and the sacrifices of praise, good works, and fellowship of his followers (Heb. 13:15-16). Instead of the earthly sanctuary, we have the heavenly sanctuary. Priesthood is not abolished, law is not destroyed, sacrifice is not done away with, and the sanctuary is not rendered useless. No! It is only that the typical system came to an end and the antitypical system – with its priesthood, its laws, its sacrifices, and its sanctuary – was established.” This is explained by [Trent Wilde](#) in his article, [“A Change in the Priesthood, a Change in the Law.”](#)

These truths had and have an impact on those of us living on earth. It gives us new duties and it provides us with new ways of carrying out old duties. As already mentioned, we are all called to this priesthood to be righteous ministers of the word. This priesthood is not based on gender, lineage, proximity to an earthly sanctuary, age, or lack of physical defect; no, it is based on righteousness, something we are all able to have (Matthew 5:48; John 8:7; Romans 6:12-13; 1 Cor. 15:34; 2 Timothy 2:22; 1 John 2:29; Revelation 19:7-8, etc.). The laws relating to the Levitical

priesthood proper were changed. They were not abolished but changed from one priestly system to another. For example, there is nothing about the priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek that requires doing away with the appointed feasts, as many think. It is true that our method of keeping the feasts is not supposed to be according to the Levitical system with its earthly sanctuary, but we are supposed to celebrate them according to Jesus' heavenly priesthood with its heavenly sanctuary. As SDAs know, our movement was born on October 22, 1844, the day of Atonement for that year. Jesus is in heaven, keeping the appointed times, and we are to do the same here on earth, according to the new priesthood of righteousness – according to the order of Melchizedek! By thus cooperating with Jesus in his priestly service, we can truly become a kingdom of priests, ministering salvation to the world!

There is much truth to be mined here. If you are interested, please see our study, ["A Change in the Priesthood – A Change in the Law,"](#) by Trent Wilde.