

WHY THE CHANGES?

Hebrews 7:11-28

Just this week someone said to me, “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.”

When is something “broke”?

When it doesn’t do what it’s suppose to do. My truck is “broke” if it can’t get me from here to there. Our internet service is “broke” if we cannot connect to the internet. A business is “broke” if it can’t provide its service or product to its customers.

When something is “broke” we need to fix it; we need to change it.

Working from the opposite direction, when we see a major change in something we wonder, “Why did they change that?”

San Vicente Road is undergoing a massive change. Why the change? To make that stretch of San Vicente less dangerous.

With the coming of Jesus our Messiah a massive change took place in God’s program: both the Law of Moses and the Aaronic Priesthood came to an end. They were replaced by the Law of Messiah and the Melchizedekian Priesthood.

As Gentiles we struggle to comprehend the magnitude of this change.

For the Jews of the first century A.D. such an idea was incomprehensible. In their view Jesus was a blasphemer, not the Messiah. As far as they were concerned absolutely nothing changed in God’s program. To suggest that the Law of Moses and the Aaronic Priesthood had ended and been replaced was, in their view, an attack on Judaism and Jewish identity.

Their hatred and persecution of messianic believers for holding such a belief is not hard to understand.

In Hebrews 7:11-28 the Preacher explains the purpose, reasons and result of this change in God’s program. He shows that this change in the law and priesthood is not a New Testament invention, but was always part of God’s plan as revealed in the Jewish Scriptures by one of the pillars of Judaism, King David himself.

The Law and Priesthood were Changed to Bring Us Near to God

In verse 11 the Preacher explains that the Law of Moses and the Aaronic Priesthood were replaced because they were unable to bring people to perfection.

Hebrews 7:11 (ESV)

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?

The Preacher makes the same point in verse 19.

Hebrews 7:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.

Our tendency is to automatically interpret *perfection* and *perfect* to mean sinless, morally pure. The word, in this context, actually means *complete* in the sense of bringing something to its full accomplishment. In the context, what is it that God is seeking to accomplish?

It is to bring us near to Him.

Look again at what is contrasted in verse 19.

Hebrews 7:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.

Similarly, in verse 25, the result of Jesus' High Priesthood is that He is able to bring us near to God.

Hebrews 7:25 (ESV)

²⁵ 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.

The purpose of this massive change from the Law of Moses and Aaronic Priesthood to the Law of Messiah and Melchizedekian Priesthood is to bring sinners of every dispensation near to God.

This applies to you and me. God loves us and wants us to be near Him. The Law of Moses and the Aaronic Priesthood were unable to bring us near to God. God changed the law and the priesthood to bring us near.

That God was going to make these changes to the law and priesthood was revealed by King David himself. Far from being an attack on Judaism, Psalm 110:4 proves that these changes were always part of God's program for Israel.

Changing the Law and Priesthood Was Always Part of God's Plan

Psalm 110:4 is key.

Written by King David approximately 1000B.C., it proves that replacing the law and priesthood were not a Gentile attack on Judaism nor an invention of the Messianic believers. Psalm 110:4 proves that it was God's plan to replace the law and priesthood a 1000 years before the Messiah came. Remember, at the time Psalm 110 was written, the Law of Moses and the Aaronic Priesthood had been functioning for 500 years and would continue to function for another 1000 years until the coming of Jesus.

Psalm 110:4 (ESV)

⁴ The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

That the Messiah would be both King and Priest was God's plan all along. It required an end to the Law of Moses and the Aaronic Priesthood because under these the Messiah could not be a priest. That is why God revealed that Messiah would be a priest, not after the *order of Aaron*, but after the *order of Melchizedek*. Clearly, God was revealing through the Jewish scriptures that the order of Aaron would one day come to an end and be replaced by the order of Melchizedek. This, in turn, indicated that the Law of Moses, which legislates the Aaronic Priesthood, would also come to an end.

These are the points the Preacher is driving home in 7:12-22.

Hebrews 7:12–22 (ESV)

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.”

¹⁸ For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness ¹⁹ (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.

²⁰ And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, ²¹ 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.’ ”

²² This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.

Through the much revered King David in the scriptures the Jews acknowledge as the authoritative Word of God, God declared Messiah would be priest, not after the order of Aaron, but after the order of Melchizedek. A new priestly order required a new law. Therefore in 1000B.C. God forecast that in the days of Messiah a massive change would take place: the Law of Moses and the Aaronic Priesthood would end and be replaced by the Law of Messiah and the Melchizedekian Priesthood. This massive change was part of God’s plan all along.

Under the Law of Moses and the Aaronic Priesthood, the priests had to continually be replaced and the sacrifices repeatedly offered. This was because the priests themselves were sinners under the sentence of death and the sacrifices were not able to pay for and purify the people from sin. As a result neither the priests nor sacrifices under the Aaronic Priesthood could bring people near to God.

Jesus is the Only High Priest Who Can Bring Us Near to God

Hebrews 7:23–27 (ESV)

²³ The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, ²⁴ but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. ²⁵ 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.

²⁶ For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. ²⁷ 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.

The weakness of the Law of Moses and the Aaronic Priesthood is seen in the temporariness of both priest and sacrifice. The tenure of every priest was temporary – every one of them died and had to be replaced. The efficacy of the sacrifices were temporary – they had to be offered over and over again throughout the year and annually on the Day of Atonement.

God fixed the weakness of the Law of Moses and the Aaronic Priesthood by ending them and replacing them with the Law of Messiah and the Melchizedekian Priesthood. On Resurrection Sunday, Jesus ascended, was appointed High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, went behind the veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies in the heavenly tabernacle and offered His blood on the Mercy Seat thus securing our salvation. He continues as our High Priest in heaven maintaining our righteous standing before the Father and interceding for our needs here on earth. His indestructible life is the guarantee of our resurrection to eternal life at which time our being brought near to God will be completed.

By virtue of His permanent, perpetual ministry as High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, Jesus saves to the uttermost, that is, He completes everything necessary to bring us near to God for eternity and He does this for every person who has ever sought to draw near to God from Adam and Eve before the cross to the last person born in the Millennial Kingdom. No other priest or sacrifice could do this.

And so the Preacher concludes:

Hebrews 7:28 (ESV)

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.

Closing Thoughts

As we continue to study the high priesthood of our Lord it drives home several amazing truths. First, it drives home the amazing nature of the Bible. When God makes reference to Melchizedek in Psalm 110:4 we realize that Melchizedek was part of God's plan all along. No human being in 1000B.C. would make this connection with the Messiah. Psalm 110:4 had to come from the mind of God to the mind of man through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Second, we need to be clear that the Law of Moses came to an end on Resurrection Sunday when Jesus was appointed High Priest. The Law of Moses is no longer operative. The Ten Commandments are no longer operative. We are under the Law of Messiah. Much confusion over such things as the Sabbath, dietary laws and tithing are resolved when we understand that the 613 commandments of the Law of Moses are no longer the body of law to which we are obligated.

Third, this study drives home the majesty and greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ. He and He alone is worthy to serve as our great High Priest. Only He is able to save us to the uttermost; no other priest can save us and we cannot save ourselves. Only Jesus is able.

Finally, we see God's heart – He did all this so that we could be near Him. Do you want to be near to God? Trust in His Son and He'll bring you home to God.