Hebrews 7:11-22 Inductive Bible Study Notes and Discussion Questions

Outline: Hebrews 7:11-22

I. Christ’s priesthood shows the Old Testament law needed a change (11-22)

II. The Levitical priesthood did not bring perfection (11)

III. Christ brings a new priesthood, not mentioned by Moses (12-14)

IV. This priesthood is not based on physical requirement (15-17)

V. Christ has become the guarantee of a better covenant (18-22)

Discussion Questions

What are the core aspects of the Law in Leviticus?

Could this make people perfect?

What does Christ’s priesthood reveal about the Levitical priesthood (it doesn’t bring perfection)?

What are the weaknesses of the Old Testament law?

If it is weak, then why did God implement it to begin with?

Should believers follow the Old Testament law anymore as given by the Levites? Why or why not?

Were there any priests from Judah in the Old Testament? Who did come from Judah (kings)?

On what basis was Christ chosen as a priest?

What does it mean according to the power of an indestructible life?

Why set aside the previous commandment? Can you think of any actual commandments in the Old Testament that have been set aside and that we need not follow?

What is the “better hope” that we have? What benefit is mentioned of this new “way?”

What does verse 21 mean?

In what way is Jesus a guarantee for us?

What is the better covenant? Compare and contrast the new and old covenants?

Cross-references

Matthew 2:1,6 – Jesus was from the tribe of Judah.
Romans 7:7-13 – The purpose of the law is to reveal sin.

Romans 3:19-20 – The law cannot make a person right with God.

Matthew 5:17 – Jesus came to fulfill the law.


Psalm 110:4 – Hebrews 7:21 is quoted from there.

**Teaching Points**

If perfection was through the Levitical priesthood – The author clearly teaches his audience about the inadequacy of the Levitical priesthood to wash away sin. Read Leviticus and you will see many of the rules related to this priesthood. Many of them concern sacrifices. Day after day, week after week, year after year for centuries the priests were offering sacrifices in the temple. Millions and millions of animals slaughtered. And yet, this did not take away people’s sin. It could only serve to cover it and offer a graphic illustration of the seriousness for sin and the need for a perfect sacrifice. Look at some of the most faithful people in the Old Testament like David. None of them could live up to the high standard of the law. Something different was needed. Something had to be changed.

This is where Jesus comes in – He was another priest who arose from a different order, not the order of Aaron. His coming was a clear sign that the law was lacking. If the Old Testament law and the Levitical priesthood “worked” then there would be no need for Jesus to come. Like the old sayings go “if it’s not broken, don’t fix it” and “don’t reinvent the wheel.” If the Mosaic law was able to permanently and finally restore the relationship between people and God, Jesus need not come.

Yet Jesus did come. He came from a tribe which never had any priests. Priests did not come from the tribe of Judah. They came from the tribe of Levi. This is something that Moses did not speak about. Jesus came, as was prophesied, from the tribe of Judah. This was the tribe which supplied kings for the throne.

Jesus is priest not on the basis of the Mosaic law which had physical requirements for being a priest (most importantly being of the tribe of Levi.) So on what basis did Jesus became a priest? Did He break the very law He gave?

The second question first. Because Jesus is the eternal Creator of the universe He is not bound to laws which God gave to people. Certainly He is not able to go against His own character, which is the basis for many of these laws, but He is not bound to the law. For example He will not lie not because He gave this law to people but because it goes against His character to lie. He will not sin in any way because He is holy. Jesus said that He is the Lord of the Sabbath and thus implied that He is not under the rules which govern how created people live on the Sabbath. To understand in simpler terms a parent need not obey all the rules he gives to his children. For example he may give a bedtime to his children for their good, but it is not necessary for him to keep this bedtime. He tells his children to hold someone else’s hand while crossing the road, but he himself does not do it.

He is priest according to the “power of an indestructible life.” He is the Son of God. He has no beginning and no end. He is the Creator of the universe. He can do whatever He wants.
Verse 17 – You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. This statement verifies that the Messiah is a priest forever.

Verse 18 – The law has weaknesses and is useless to truly restore people to God finally and permanently. So what’s the positives and negatives of the law? See cross-references.

The law does serve a purpose or God would not have given it. The main purpose can be seen in Romans chapter 7. That is, it shows people clearly their sin. Basically the law serves as a mirror or a measuring stick. By looking at it, we can see how far we fall short. It helps us to evaluate ourselves accurately by God’s standard. Any honest person examining himself by the law will see that he falls woefully short. This should have several benefits for us.

It humbles us – By evaluating ourselves with the law we can see how far short of God’s standard we are. There is no room for pride or boasting. We see God for who He is and ourselves for who we are.

It shows us the cost of sin – In the OT law sacrifices were made for sin. It showed people that sin must be punished. This punishment was severe, ugly, and gruesome. Only because of God’s mercy was a person not punished himself. This was a daily reminder about the seriousness of sin.

It shows us that we need help. I believe that this is one of, if not the, primary reasons for the OT law. It leads people to a proper state of hopelessness in their own ability to solve the problem of sin. It leads people to God as the only source of any salvation from this inescapable pit of sin we have dug for ourselves.

The one key negative of the law is that it makes nothing perfect. It cannot bring anyone back to God. It cannot permanently solve the problem of sin. It seemed to make the gap between people and God even larger. God is infinitely holy and sinful people had no hope to bridge the gap to Him.

God’s revelation is progressive – If you study the whole Bible you will see that God did not reveal everything about Himself or His plan all at once. He did it little by little. Why? Obviously it was the best way because God is omniscient. Just imagine for example if God sent Jesus to die for humanity right after Adam and Eve sinned. While Adam and Eve may have accepted this, it is very likely that future generations would pridefully think they didn’t need it (after all they didn’t eat the forbidden fruit). By waiting for thousands of years, God proved conclusively that people could not do it on their own. People had millennia of hard data and experiences highlighting over and over again our own inability to solve this problem. A famous preacher (I believe Moody) said you have to “preach a person into a hell before you can preach them into heaven.” His point was that you have to show a person he is lost and needs help before he is willing to accept help. When you look at all of human history, that is what God has already done on a grand scale!

Better hope – Thank God we have a better hope. Jesus came as the ultimate, perfect, once-for-all sacrifice for sinners. He did this so that we can draw near to God. Remember that when Jesus died the veil to the holy of holies was ripped from top to bottom. This signified that people now had access to God. The gap had been bridged. Through Christ, we can be children of God. He also gives the Holy Spirit to indwell us. We have many spiritual blessings in Christ (see Ephesians 1) and for that we should be thankful. We also have the benefit of history to humble us and remind us there was no other way and we cannot save ourselves.

Verse 21 shows the finality of this covenant. MacArthur puts it like this. “The Melchizedekian
priesthood of Christ is confirmed with God’s oath in Ps 110:4. God’s mind will not change on the matter.”

In what way is Jesus a guarantee of a better covenant. Go around the table and each person mention one difference between the Old and New Covenants. Keep going as long as you can. How has the covenant through Christ impacted your life?

**Application:** What can/should you do based on what you have learned today?