

Sermon Transcript
12.07.2025
Hebrews 7:11-14

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- Imagine you're a general manager of an NBA team and you happen to have one of the 2 or 3 best players in basketball. He's young and nearly averages a triple double. He's led you to back-to-back conference finals and last year took you all the way to the NBA finals for only the third time in history.
- Now imagine that you're having coffee with your buddy, who happens to be the GM of an historic rival in your same conference. And during drinks the idea of trading this superstar is floated.
- And what your buddy offers you in return is one first round draft pick and an ailing older player with a history of injuries.
- No one would be insane enough to make that trade right?
- Why not? Because you don't change a winning team. If it aint broke, don't fix it. Let sleeping dogs lie. Don't rock the boat. Stick w/ what works. Leave well enough alone.
- Now, take another scenario. You're the GM of an NFL team. You have a history of waiting to re-sign many of your most talented players. Unfortunately, you end up waiting too long and they either sit out or you eventually back down at the very last minute and not only end up far overpaying your players, but also adversely affect team chemistry and preparedness. Or perhaps you even play around too long and end up having to trade one of your best players to a rival for well below expected value.
- This strategy of delaying contract renewals to the last minute isn't working and yet you keep on doing the same thing over and over again for decades on end, the very definition of insanity. But you aren't fired because you happen to be the owner as well as the GM.
- Thankfully Dallas fans can't relate to either of these sports scenarios.
- But what they have in common is that they're opposite extremes to the question of when to make a change. In one case, you change what you shouldn't, you alter what's working, in the other case you refuse to change what isn't.
- And that reminds me of our text this morning as the author of Hebrews will show why a change in the priesthood and a change in the law was necessary. The former administration was broken, imperfect, insufficient. The law and the Levitical priesthood were unable to do what needed to be done.
- And as we'll see in future weeks, the change that God has introduced has provided perfection and sufficiency so there is no need to make any further changes once the fullness of God's provision is worked out in Christ.
- The insufficiency of the law and Levitical priesthood and the sufficiency of God's promise and provision of Christ.
- That's what we'll see this morning. First, let's pray.
- Self, others, me.

- Christ is better! That's the theme of Hebrews. He's better than sin. Better than temptation.
- But the skeletal undergirding, the overarching message, the heart, the meat of Christ's supremacy in the book of Hebrews is the fact that He offers a better salvation. He's the mediator and high priest of a better covenant, establishing a better hope with better promises, offering a better sacrifice with better substance in a better temple, leading to a better land.
- The new covenant is better than the old. Christ's priesthood is better than the Aaronic or Levitical priesthood.
- As John says in His gospel:
 - *For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.* (John 1:16–17)
- Christ isn't just a new Moses, but a better Moses. We haven't just experienced a liberation typologically similar to the Exodus, but a better redemption. Christ isn't just a new prophet, priest or king, but a better prophet, priest, AND king.
- And if He is better, then why in the world would we be tempted to go back? Why go back to the shadow when you have the substance?
- But that's the exact temptation facing the Hebrews. In the face of persecution, the congregation is tempted to compromise, to apostatize, to go back to the seeming safety of the synagogue.
- So the author writes this book to encourage the people to hold fast, to stand firm, to live in light of the better reality of the new covenant founded upon the better offering of Jesus Christ.
- To make that point, the author has set the stage by highlighting a contrast between two priesthoods. One is the Levitical priesthood embedded in the law and the other is a priesthood after the order of Melchizedek established in the gospel.
- Remember where the author gets this idea of a Melchizedekian priesthood. From Psalm 110 which starts like this:
 - *The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."* (Psalm 110:1)
- You may recall that Jesus quotes this passage in his debate with the Jewish leadership of his day. The implication is that the messiah, the son of David, must be more than a mere human king if David calls him Lord. Fathers aren't inclined to call their kids lord. At least good fathers don't let their sons rule over them.
- So the fact that King David calls the messiah his Lord is theologically significant.
- And the author of Hebrews picks this idea up in chapter 1 where he quotes Psalm 110 to argue that Jesus is greater than the angels. As 1:13 asks:
 - *And to which of the angels has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"?* (Hebrews 1:13)
- So Psalm 110 is in the author's mind. In fact, it's a passage laden with theological baggage, being the most referenced OT chapter in the NT. In addition to Hebrews, we find it in the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Paul.
- And if you keep on reading, you'll get to verse 4 which says:
 - *The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."* (Psalm 110:4)

- Back in chapter 6, we felt the gravity of the fact that the Lord swore an oath. God cannot lie. So He has no need to swear and yet He condescends to do so in order to minister to our weakness. The problem isn't that God is untrustworthy, but that we are untrusting. So God swears for our sake. He makes promises so that we might rest in those promises.
- Anytime God swears something, we should slow down and ask why. It is like God is underline and circling and highlighting a promise.
- And those promises show the unchanging, unwavering nature of God's plans and purposes.
- As Hebrews 13 will say, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.
- And so the fact that God has sworn that this Messianic king is priest is profound. In fact, its so profound that starting in ch 5 of Hebrews, we hear whispers of a Melchizekian priesthood. Those whispers continue in ch 6, but by ch 7, this is now front & center in the argument of the book.
- Imagine trying to squeeze the last drops out of a tube of toothpaste. That's kind of what chapters 7-10 do for this image of Christ's priesthood. Each section is going to attempt to exhaust the inexhaustible riches of the meaning of Christ's priestly ministry in offering Himself for our sin.
- He will show in a series of contrasts that in various ways, the ministry of Christ was and is superior to that of the Levitical priesthood.
- And so over the past two sermons we've been introduced to a series of contrasts between Melchizedek and Abraham and ultimately between Christ and the Levitical priesthood.
- Last week we considered the consequence of the blessing and offering of Abraham. The fact that Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek and Melchizedek blessed Abraham is understood typologically to tell us something about their relative honor.
- At least in the Genesis account, the priest king Melchizedek is described as being in a position of authority or honor over Abraham.
- And if Melchizedek was greater than Abraham then a priest descended from Melchizedek is greater than a priest descended from Abraham. If that doesn't make sense, go back and listen to last week's sermon.
- But with that context in mind, let's look at vs. 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? (Hebrews 7:11)

- As we get into this, let's take a survey. Its Christmas time & maybe you've been making a list of things you'd like from your spouse or parents or whomever. So raise your hand if you're the kind of person who gets a new phone, computer, car or something simply because there is something newer to get? Now, how many of you just keep using the same old thing until it breaks?
- I'm much more of the latter. I tend to use the same phone, the same computer, etc. until they just don't work anymore. And then even after I get a new one, I often hold on to the old "just in case."

- Well, it seems like that's what these Hebrews were doing. They were trying to enjoy the benefits of the new covenant, but also hold on to the shadows of the old covenant as well. They wanted the gospel and the Mosaic law, Christ's priesthood and Aaron's.
- The problem with that is that God didn't merely upgrade a perfectly good covenant. Rather, as we'll see, he discards the old because of its insufficiency, inefficacy, imperfection.
- As we'll read in chapter 8
 - *In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away. (Hebrews 8:13)*
- Why was a new covenant necessary? Why was a new priesthood necessary? Well, the author of Heb says, if perfection had been attainable thru the Levitical priesthood, it would have sufficed.
- And in Greek, that "if" is a 2nd class condition meaning that the way the author structures the conditional statement clarifies that the condition isn't met. IOW, the author writes, if perfection had been attainable, but the way he structures it linguistically clarifies that it was not attainable. He's not being hypothetical, he's flat out saying that perfection was impossible in that system.
- The idea of perfection is pervasive in Hebrews. We've encountered it a number of times already. For instance:
 - *For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. (Hebrews 2:10)*
 - *And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him... (Hebrews 5:9)*
- So we've seen that perfection is found in Christ and this contrasts with the law and the Levitical priesthood. As we'll read in chapter 9:
 - *...According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation. (Hebrews 9:9-10)*
 - *For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. (Hebrews 10:1-4)*
- Or, using another word to express a similar idea, chapter 8 says:
 - *For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. (Hebrews 8:7)*
- But again, this contrasts with Christ according to 10:14 which says:
 - *For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. (Hebrews 10:14)*
- So, there is a contrast between the imperfection of the Levitical priesthood and the perfection of Christ's priesthood. One is ineffective, the other is efficacious.

- One is insufficient, the other is sufficient. One is impotent, the other is effectual.
- And by Levitical priesthood, the author is painting with a broad brush. In reality, he is primarily concerned with the Aaronic priesthood. That's why he writes about it being named after the order of Aaron. So what's the difference between the Aaronic and Levitical priesthood? We talked about this a couple of months ago, but here is a refresher.
- You may remember that both Moses and his brother Aaron were from the tribe of Levi. And, unlike the other tribes of Israel, the tribe of Levi did not receive an allotment of land by inheritance. Rather, the Levites were set apart to serve in the tabernacle and later in the temple.
- So that is the Levitical priesthood. But there was a special privilege that was extended to Aaron and his sons which is that they were appointed to serve as high priests, the ones who would offer the annual day of atonement or Yom Kippur sacrifice of atonement.
- So all Aaronic priests were Levites, but not all Levites were Aaronic priests like all lions are cats, but not all cats are lions.
- All who were descended from Levi could serve as priests or at least minister in the temple, but only those descended from Aaron could serve as high priests.
- And that is what the author is concerned with. He isn't concerned with the Levitical priesthood in general, but with the Aaronic priesthood in particular because the issue is atonement and only Aaron's sons could offer the sacrifice of atonement. No doubt, the Levites could have done a relatively sufficient job in ministering in the temple on a daily basis. They could change the showbread and light the incense and teach the Torah and lead worship, but what they couldn't do perfectly was offer sacrifices of atonement.
- Why was the Levitical or Aaronic priesthood imperfect? Because those priests were sinful and mortal and because the blood of bulls and goats could never truly atone. We'll see that in the next couple of chapters. But for now, just notice the contrast between the perfection of Christ's priesthood and the imperfection of the Levitical priesthood.
- So what is meant by perfection? Well, that word in Greek is from the same underlying root as tetelestai which you might recall was one of Christ's final words on the cross meaning it is finished or it is accomplished.
- By saying that the Levitical priesthood was imperfect, the author means that it couldn't do what was necessary for completion. It couldn't accomplish the intended task.
- What's that mean? Well, I'll answer it with a question.
- Suppose I were to ask you what is the chief end of man? How would you respond?
- According to the Westminster Shorter Catechism, it is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. But because of sin, we are unable to do that properly and thus we are unable to experience the fullness of joy in eternal relationship with God.
- If you think back to the garden of Eden, you have a picture of a temple. The garden is where God and mankind dwell together in peace. In fact, when you read about the building of Solomon's temple, you might notice that it is adorned with garden imagery and the command that is given to Adam is the same command in Hebrews as is given to the priests guarding the temple.
- So the garden is a type of a temple which is itself a picture of Christ.

- But again, because of sin, man's access to God is restricted. He is kicked out of the garden, just as man is forbidden to enter the holy of holies which represents God's dwelling place.
- So the goal of the priests is to offer a semblance of access back into the presence of God. That's what perfection symbolizes.
- In Paul, that word tends to mean mature or full grown, but in Hebrews, perfection refers to the goal or aim of Christianity, which is access to God.
- We see that when we look at vs. 19
 - *(for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God. (Hebrews 7:19)*
- Notice there the relationship between perfection and access to God. To make perfect is to allow us to draw near to God.
- So there is a separation between God and man. We are barred from His presence by sin.
- And the priesthood is intended to solve that problem, but the Aaronic priesthood was unable to bridge that gap to overcome that deficiency.
- Like trying to take down a bear with a bb gun or taping a couple of wings to your back in order to fly or trying to hit a homerun using a pool noodle, so trying to use the Levitical priesthood to attain perfection is futile.
- In fact, if perfection would have been attainable under that system, then there wouldn't be a need for a new system. If the Levitical priesthood was sufficient, then there would be no need for the promise of a priesthood after the order of Melchizedek.
- If the Aaronic priesthood was good enough, then why revise it? What's the point?
- In other words, the author is saying that God didn't merely upgrade a perfectly good covenant. He didn't take something that was basically working & decide to just offer a slight revision. Rather, He provided an entirely new covenant in light of the insufficiency and inability of the previous.
- He isn't upgrading a pretty good covenant, He is replacing a broken one.
- The purpose of the priesthood was to effect purification so that the people might be acceptable in the presence of God.
- But the priests themselves were imperfect. The idea of them being able to provide purification would be like trying to use a dirty diaper to clean up a spill. Far from cleaning things, it just made it worse.
- So God provided a new priesthood and a new priest, a perfect priesthood and a perfect priest.
- BTW, there is OT precedent for this sort of priestly revision on God's part. In fact, there is even a grammatical hint in the text that this story might be in the author's mind as another typological example.
- Think back to the book of 1 Samuel. In the beginning a man named Eli is serving as priest. And Eli has two sons, Hophni and Phineas, and they are described as worthless men. That's not a great testimony to your character when God calls you worthless. You've made some bad choices in life if that's what history remembers about you. So the Lord rebukes Eli and tells him that He will put his two sons to death and in that passage he says this:

- *And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever. (1 Samuel 2:35)*
- This is a prophecy of Samuel, who would anoint both Saul and eventually David as kings over Israel.
- But notice the words I will raise up for myself. That verb raise up in the LXX is the same as Hebrews uses of another priest **arising** after the order of Melchizedek.
- In other words, as Eli's priesthood was rejected and replaced by Samuel's, so the Aaronic priesthood is rejected and replaced by Christ's. So there is precedent for this, an OT example of God replacing one priesthood with another.
- But to make this point, he needs to explain the connection between the priesthood and the law. We'll see that in vs. 12.

For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. (Hebrews 7:12)

- The first major controversy in the life of the church was over the question of how Christians are to relate to the Mosaic Law.
- And to this day that is still a somewhat controversial question. For instance, just try to quote Levitical prohibitions of homosexuality and someone will bring up prohibitions about eating shellfish or wearing clothing of mixed fibers. Or are we still under the Sabbath or tithe? Or what should we think of tattoos?
- All of these questions arise because of the tension between the continuity and discontinuity, the similarity and dissimilarity between covenants.
- So some people deal with that tension by advocating for a three-fold division of the law into moral, ceremonial, and civil, with the idea that the moral law remains in force while the ceremonial and civil have been abrogated. And while that's a helpful general principle, it doesn't work perfectly because the Bible itself says that you can't split the law and besides, the distinction between moral, ceremonial and civil is often blurry.
- Unraveling all of these issues is beyond the concern of this passage, but suffice to say that some degree of change in the law is authorized. Not because God has just set aside the law, but because Christ perfectly fulfilled it.
- As a result, we are no longer under the Mosaic Law, we are under the law of Christ, the law of the gospel. And there is similarity and dissimilarity between those legal administrations.
- The OT is still authoritative, inerrant, inspired, but we relate to it through the filter of the gospel. We don't unhitch ourselves from the OT, but neither do we read it apart from the new. This means that sometimes there will seem to be quite a bit of overlap between the prohibitions given to Israel and those given to the church. Don't murder, don't commit sexual immorality, don't steal, don't bear false witness, etc.
- But other times there will be fairly radical differences, such as the fact that Christians can eat pork and shellfish and marry other ethnicities and that we shouldn't offer sacrifices and so forth.
- And then there are things that different denominations or churches might differ on. Whether or not tattoos are allowed, whether or not the Sabbath is binding, whether or

not baptism has replaced circumcision such that we should sprinkle babies. This is where there is some gray and some confusion.

- An analogy that we've used before to describe the similarity and dissimilarity between the administration and authority of the Mosaic Law and the law of Christ is driving from OK to Texas. From a cursed land to the promised land. You're driving 70 as you cross the border and you're still driving 70 in the lone star state, but you are under a different authority, a different administration. There is similarity between the laws of OK and TX, but also dissimilarity.
- Likewise when it comes to the way that Christians relate to the Mosaic Law, there is similarity and dissimilarity. We don't obey simply because something is written in the OT law, we obey in those areas where there is overlap between the covenants, where there is continuity and similarity.
- So speaking of the Old Covenant, the author of Hebrews will later write:
 - *...According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.* (Hebrews 9:9–10)
- Notice again the idea of perfection and the phrase imposed until the time of reformation. The same way that there is similarity between the Roman Catholic Church and Protestantism, but also dissimilarity, so there is similarity but also dissimilarity between the covenants.
- And so the regulations are imposed "UNTIL" the time of reformation. In other words, once the reformation occurs, then the regulations are no longer in place.
- As Paul writes in Galatians 3
 - *So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.* (Galatians 3:24)
- That word guardian could be translated as a babysitter. The idea is that at some point you should outgrow the need of a babysitter. So the law was always a parenthesis in the plan of God, a temporary babysitter UNTIL Christ.
- BTW, one of the themes were talked about last week and we'll see in coming weeks is the difference between law and promise. We see that the law is changeable and that is another contrast with the idea of promise since as we saw in chapter 6, the promises of God are unchangeable. For instance, 6:18 says:
 - *so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.* (Hebrews 6:18)
- But again, a full fledged exposition of the differences between the covenants or between law and promise isn't what the author is arguing for here. We'll deal with some of that later in the book. For now, he is content to make a connection between the priesthood and the law such that a change in one necessitates a change in the other.
- Why is that? Because those two aspects of the Mosaic covenant had a symbiotic relationship. The law established the priesthood and the priesthood provided the atonement upon which the law functioned.
- So a change in wine demands a change in wineskins.

- But this whole idea was contrary to the Jewish view of the law which was that the Torah was an expression of God's unchanging will.
- This isn't surprising because on the surface, it seems to be a permanent fixture. After all, you'll read about things in the Mosaic Law that are declared to a statute forever like the lighting of the golden lampstand in the tabernacle or the day of atonement sacrifice. Or circumcision which was said to be an everlasting covenant. Or even the Aaronic priesthood itself. Look at Exodus 40:15
 - *and anoint them, as you anointed their father, that they may serve me as priests. And their anointing shall admit them to a perpetual priesthood throughout their generations.* (Exodus 40:15)
- So how do we understand Exodus 40 in light of Hebrews 7? It seems like a contradiction to say that the Aaronic priesthood is perpetual in one place, but that its superseded in another.
- So what do we make of the idea of perpetual statutes in the old that are eventually revised in the new? A few thoughts that might help:
- First, is the fact that perpetual should be understood in a qualified not an absolute state. In other words, those statutes were given to Israel to last throughout their generations as long as they were under that particular covenant, but not necessarily eternally.
- Sometimes the word translated as perpetual can mean eternal, but other times, it just means a really long period of time or something that lasts until some other condition is met.
- Second, we need to understand the provisional and typological function of those laws, namely to point forward to a greater and more perfect reality in Christ.
- To understand that, we need remind ourselves of the difference between the shadow and the substance.
- As Colossians 2 says:
 - *Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.* (Colossians 2:16-17)
- This is helpful because we can therefore distinguish the shadow from the substance. For example, when it comes to circumcision. What circumcision represented abides forever. The Messiah has come through the seed of Abraham who circumcises the hearts of His people. So the meaning of circumcision abides, but circumcision itself does not. Once the substance arrives, the shadow fades.
- I think we can apply this same sort of idea to the other shadows and symbols of the OT. In other words, what they represent, what they symbolize, what they point to, will endure forever, but the shadow and ceremony and symbol themselves may change.
- And to understand how they have changed, we need to read them through the lens of the New Testament's inspired interpretation of those things.
- One more thing to note is that the prophecy that the Aaronic priesthood would be superseded comes from the OT itself. Remember that Psalm 110:4 spoke of one who would come after the order of Melchizedek. So this isn't an issue of a contradiction between the old and new testaments, but rather a tension that exists even within the old testament itself. There is a sense in which the Aaronic priesthood is perpetual, but another sense in which it is temporary.

- But the primary point that the author is making is that you can't change the priesthood without changing the law because the law specifically dictated that the priesthood was reserved for Levites descended from Aaron.
- Given that Christ was not descended from Aaron in particular or even the tribe of Levi in general, there needed to be a change in the overarching covenant itself as we'll see in subsequent weeks.
- But let's see how Christ's tribal descent is relevant in verses 13-14.

For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. (Hebrews 7:13-14)

- So, once again, general ministerial duties in the tabernacle and/or temple were appointed to the tribe of Levi. Within the tribe of Levi, the particular family of Aaron was appointed to serve in a priestly role.
- For someone outside of that line to serve as a priest had no precedent nor permission from God.
- In other words, none who were non-Levites could serve in this role. In fact, for a non-Levite to attempt to approach the altar in this way was to invite death. We see this throughout the book of Numbers. For instance:
 - *When the tabernacle is to set out, the Levites shall take it down, and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up. And if any outsider comes near, he shall be put to death. (Numbers 1:51)*
 - *And you shall appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall guard their priesthood. But if any outsider comes near, he shall be put to death. (Numbers 3:10)*
 - *And behold, I have taken your brothers the Levites from among the people of Israel. They are a gift to you, given to the LORD, to do the service of the tent of meeting. And you and your sons with you shall guard your priesthood for all that concerns the altar and that is within the veil; and you shall serve. I give your priesthood as a gift, and any outsider who comes near shall be put to death. (Numbers 18:6-7)*
- So it wasn't just that no one from another tribe had served at the altar or that Moses had said nothing about other tribes serving as priests, it was that to do so was specifically forbidden by the law. That was why, as we saw earlier, a change in the law was necessary.
- Because Jesus wasn't descended from Levi, but from Judah.
- Now a couple of things to note here.
- First, notice the fact that the author has called Jesus Lord. As Ed has shown us in his HANDS series on the deity of Christ, we know that term carries more than just messianic meaning, it is saturated with theological significance. Namely, when the NT speaks of Jesus as Lord, that often implies His deity. In many contexts, Lord means God.
- We can assume it does so here given the fact that its alluding to Psalm 110 which starts:
 - *The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." (Psalm 110:1)*

- There Lord means much more than master.
- That's one of the things that I hope Ed's series has done for you. To show you just how much the NT is dripping with an apologetic for the deity of Christ. It isn't just one or two prooftexts, but dozens and dozens of interrelated texts that together radiate the divine glory of Jesus.
- That may make apologetics more difficult since you have to get into the weeds, but it should give us tremendous confidence that our convictions aren't tenuous. The case for the deity of Christ isn't resting on one or two shaky legs, but dozens and dozens of firm arguments.
- And here we also see two themes that we've seen combined already in Hebrews. On one hand Jesus is Lord, that is God, but on the other hand, He is descended from Judah.
- So we see the deity of Christ and the humanity of Christ. As we've talked about before, perhaps no book presents such a holistic picture of Christology. Perhaps in no book is the deity and humanity of Christ so clearly revealed as in Hebrews.
- So that's the first thing to note.
- Second, look at the word descended. Our Lord was descended from Judah. There is a little nuance there that we might miss in English.
- In Greek, the word there is *anatello* which isn't the normal way of talking about biological descent. It's a bit of a strange word to use in referring to someone's lineage.
- It literally means "to rise up" or "spring up," as in the rising of the sun and the springing forth of crops. You can see that sort of usage in connection with genealogy when God tells someone that He will **raise up** offspring.
- And that is significant when you consider the OT prophecies of a messianic figure who will be raised up.
 - *I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth. (Numbers 24:17)*
 - *And say to him, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD. It is he who shall build the temple of the LORD and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." ' (Zechariah 6:12-13)*
 - *Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. (Jeremiah 23:5)*
- That image of one coming out or branching out or being raised up is all the same Greek word *anatello* in the LXX. That's why the KJV translates Hebrews 7:14 like this:
 - *For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. (Hebrews 7:14, KJV)*
- So this is saying that Christ was descended from Judah, but it is saying more than that Christ was descended from Judah, this is at least implicitly connecting his birth with the particular prophecies of God's provision of an anointed, a branch, a star of Jacob, a shoot of Jesse.
- As Isaiah 60:1 says,

- *Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.* (Isaiah 60:1)
 - Again, risen is anathema.
- So Christ is more than a descendant of Judah, more than a king like David, more than a priest like Samuel, more than a priestly king like Melchizedek, more even than an anointed Messiah. He is the very nature and glory of God.
- As we saw way back in chapter 1
 - *He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...* (Hebrews 1:3)
- And so in Christ we see the fulfillment of God's promises, promises that light would rise and that the glory of God would shine on the people, promises that God Himself would dwell among the people, Immanuel.
- And consider the effect this would have had on the original audience of the book of Hebrews. As they are suffering, they are probably questioning whether or not God was with them.
- Or as we suffer today, how do we know that God is with us, that God is for us?
- When storms hit. When cancer comes. When the darkness won't lift. When we are plunged into despair and confusion, to what can we cling?
- Not the shadows of the old. Try clinging to a shadow and you'll see how futile that is.
- The first century audience was tempted to return to the Mosaic law and Levitical priesthood because it was more tangible. They could see and touch and hear the priests and the sacrifices.
- Or as the Israelites in the wilderness were tempted to make a golden calf in order to bring God down. So we are tempted to trust our senses and our intuitions rather than the promises of God.
- But the answer to the question of how we can know that we are loved. How can we know that we are accepted. How can we know that God is with us? The answer to that is Jesus Christ.
- What was impossible in the shadows and symbols of the old is fulfilled in the substance of the new. So it is not only foolish, but futile and fatal to seek perfection and hope and fulfillment elsewhere.
- Perfection was impossible under the Aaronic priesthood because the priests themselves were imperfect, but Christ's perfection provides for our own.
- And as we talked about perfection in this sense relates to being able to enter into the presence of God, being able to draw near with confidence that we will not be destroyed, but received.
- The design of the gospel is to overcome the barrier. That's why Christ is called the door. He is the entry point to fellowship with God. He gives us full access to the sovereign God of the universe.
- That is something that the Levitical priesthood and Aaronic priests and Mosaic covenant could never do. The priests themselves were separated from God by the curtain, the veil. And only the high priest could go in and only once a year and only after elaborate rituals, but Christ has not only entered the shadow, but the substance, and not

only gone behind the curtain, but torn it down, and not only gone alone, but brought us with Him.

- As it says in the gospel of John
 - *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me..."* (John 14:6)
- He has made a way, not by law, but promise and therefore we enter not by works, but faith. Faith that Christ is better and Christ is enough.
- Let's pray.

Communion

- Fence table
- As we prepare to partake, let's read from the gospel of Matthew about the institution of the supper.
- *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."* (Matthew 26:26–29)
- What the blood of bulls and goats offered by Aaron could not do, Christ has done. He has made a new and better covenant by means of a new and better sacrifice.
- So as we partake, I want you to do so with confidence that it is truly finished. You are forgiven. Perfection has arrived and we have access to God by means of all that this meal signifies.
- The body of Christ...
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