

Hebrews 7:11-28 – From a Partial Picture to a Perfect Picture – Lesson Summary

One of my favorite videos on YouTube is of a Christian artist who paints a picture of Jesus. That sounds simple enough but he begins the picture upside down, not the artist but the painting itself. As the painting takes form it doesn't resemble much, but when he turns it right side up, Jesus suddenly becomes perfectly clear. It's pretty amazing to think that the artist has been painting a picture of Jesus the whole time but we were just unable to see it. The author of Hebrews does the same thing as he presents Melchizedek in the beginning verses of Hebrews 7. We see Melchizedek and small glimpses of Jesus but it's in the final verses of the chapter that the author "flips" his description. He now presents Jesus and it becomes evident that Melchizedek was only a partial picture of our Savior, but Jesus is the perfect picture of our Savior.

Consider the characteristics that the author of Hebrews focused on when describing Melchizedek in verses 1-10. He begins by declaring that he is a righteous king and priest of peace. He then emphasizes the "timeless" nature of this righteous king and priest of peace. Finally, he addresses the greater nature of Melchizedek. By the time he completes his description of Melchizedek we have a "timeless righteous king and priest of peace who receives offerings and bestows blessing". That's a beautiful picture but it isn't until the next verses (11-28) that we see Jesus as an even greater picture, a complete picture, the perfect picture.

In the final verses of this chapter the author emphasizes **three characteristics of Christ**. He considers the **perfect nature** of Jesus our king and priest. He then considers the **superior nature** of Christ. And finally, the author introduces us to the **permanent nature** of Christ. In order to emphasize Christ's perfect priestly nature, we are told that the old sacrificial law was insufficient to provide forgiveness for our sin. The old sacrificial system was a physical demonstration of our need for salvation but could not accomplish it. Our works can never accomplish salvation either. In pointing out the insufficiency of the old system while declaring Christ's perfect sacrifice through His own shed blood, we see that Jesus is our perfect priest and king.

The next characteristic the author emphasizes is the superior nature of Christ. In verse 19 he addresses Jesus as "a better hope". Our better hope is that through Christ we can approach the Father without need of sacrifice. In verse 26 we see that Jesus is "exalted above the heavens" because He is holy, innocent, unstained, and separated from sinners. All other priests required their own sacrifices in order to present sacrifices for the sins of the congregation. Because Jesus went before the Father blameless yet bearing our sin we find forgiveness in His grace and mercy. The blameless spotless lamb takes on the sin of the world and dies the death we deserve in order that we might be blameless in the sight of our Heavenly Father. He is clearly a perfect and superior priest and king.

Finally, the author emphasizes the permanent nature of Jesus our priest and king. Verse 21 is a quotation from Psalm 110 in which God speaks of providing a permanent priest. All other priests eventually died, but Christ died to be raised again. Jesus becomes our permanent priest who is always making intercession on our behalf. His priesthood is permanent because He is permanent. Christ's death on the cross is sufficient to cover our past, present, and future sins because He has existed eternally for this purpose. Because our Savior is the perfect, superior, and permanent priest and king, our salvation is secured. Jesus is a Priest and King like none other. Melchizedek was a partial picture of Jesus. Jesus, however, is the perfect picture of deliverance and a reflection of our Heavenly Father. Has Jesus become the perfect, superior, and permanent Priest in your life? Have you come to trust that His sacrifice is sufficient to cover your sin?

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Consider the world's definition and usage of the word "perfect". How does it fall short of the perfection that the author talks about in this passage?
- 2) Jesus the Great High Priest replaces the sacrificial system that required the work of the priest to atone for sin. What are some of the ways you try to "work" for God's mercy and grace?
- 3) How do you feel when you hear that in Christ all of your past, present, and future sins are forgiven? Others might use that as an excuse to keep sinning, but true believers, understand this truth provides freedom to pursue Christ and not sin. How are you encouraged by Christ's permanent forgiveness?