

Unlike the Levitical priesthood and its regulations which kept the people distant from God, by Jesus Christ, the believer's great High Priest, believers today can draw near to God. He is a 'different' priest, a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, who makes the believer acceptable to God and opens the way to draw near to Him in the future and in the present.

I. *Jesus, a different Priest, attains 'perfection' for believers (7:11–14).*

1. The "perfection" which could not be attained through the Levitical priesthood is the condition in which a person is found acceptable to God.
 - a. Sinfulness makes it impossible for any person to stand before a righteous, holy God (cf. Romans 3:10–18; Isaiah 64:6).
 - b. Striving to keep the law cannot do it, since the moral requirements of the law only makes conscious of sin (Romans 3:20) and the ritual requirements remind of the distance from God.
2. Psalm 110:4 revealed the need for a different priest, one of a different order (that of Melchizedek) who would also be King (cf. 110:2, Genesis 49:10).
3. A change in priesthood required a change of the law, since the laws given after the establishment of the priesthood which regulated worship in the hands of the priests would not longer have validity for a different priesthood.

The Jewish Christian of that day should not return to a trust in the old system thinking it was needed to make them acceptable to God. Gentile Christians today need not become Jews, nor should they turn to ritual, wrongly thinking it gives a right standing before God. Cf. Colossians 2:20–23. Only the perfect sacrifice of Jesus can give a right standing before God, when accepted by faith alone.

II. *Jesus, a different Priest, introduces 'a better hope' for believers (7:15–19).*

1. Jesus is a "different" Priest (7:15–17).
 - a. Jesus is not only in the order of Melchizedek, He is in the likeness of Melchizedek (cf. v.3) in that He is a priest forever (Psalm 110:4). By the absence of any record of his death, Melchizedek pictured figuratively the indestructible life of Jesus.
 - b. Unlike Aaronic priests, whose succession had to be carefully regulated, the risen, exalted Jesus Christ cannot die. He is and will ever be there for His people, a sure hope for now and forever.
2. Jesus, as a "different" Priest, introduces a "better hope" (7:18–19).
 - a. It is a better hope because "on the one hand" the old system, the priesthood with all its regulations, is set aside. Though the law served God's purposes, it was not able to nor intended to make people fit for God's presence, fully acceptable to Him. Hence, it was "weak and useless" to bring "perfection."
 - b. It is a better hope "on the other hand" because we have Jesus, a "different" high priest. Hope inherently points to the future, a time when Jesus will gather all of His own that they may be with Him where He is, an eternity in the presence of God. But the believer's hope is anchored now in the presence of God (6:19–20a), so that by it believers may even now draw near to God.

Only in Christ, trusting in Him alone to be acceptable to God, may a person be found acceptable and draw near to God. Feeling "right" doesn't guarantee acceptance; not feeling "right" does not mean exclusion. The true believer has access to God. A "feeling" of distance might be due to sin, so confess known sin (1 John 1:9) and pray that God reveals and cleanses unknown sin (Psalm 19:12; 139:23–24). True believers have a High Priest by whom they can with confidence draw near to God!

Questions for further reflection:

- What gives you a sense of being acceptable to God? What should give you a sense of being acceptable to God? What would help to assure that you constantly are thinking correctly in this area?
- What are the dangers you personally encounter which distort your sense of being able to draw near to God? In what ways do you take advantage of this great privilege of drawing near to God? How could you improve?