

## Prayer

We offer ourselves to You, Jesus Christ, because You have given us Your life. Receive our prayers of praise and our confession of sin; heal us and set us free. Use us to do Your work in the world, to liberate those people who are bound by Satan's hold and to live a life which demonstrates every kind of love, care and compassion. This we ask in Jesus' name: AMEN

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: The Church Triumphant

Finish this week by praising God for the great testimony of the Church Triumphant, and those who have gone before us. One day, we will meet them in heaven, so do your best to read a book or investigate further the history of the Church of God played out in the lives of ordinary people like you and me. Thank God for the encouragement He gives us through them.

## Meditation

Can you feel the heartbeat of Christ the Lord  
In creation's ageless song;  
The rhythm found in the Word of Life  
which stirs the human soul.

We love to sing of the power of God  
With confidence and passion,  
And with the blood of Christ and the new wine of life  
The Spirit carries us on.

But when the earth beneath our feet begins  
To cry out for love and justice;  
Our songs and worship, preaching and word,  
Must take this theme, nothing less.

For our witness to the world is null and void  
If we ignore our planet's plight;  
And if we do not stand up in God's name and shout  
There might be no earth left, nor life.

Come my spirit, body and soul,  
And hear the truth of our times.  
There is no more revival left for us to proclaim  
Than that which saves the world.

Maranatha - Come, Lord Jesus, come.

## Bible Study - Hebrews 7:15-22

<sup>15</sup> It is all the more obvious if another priest is raised up who is just like Melchizedek, <sup>16</sup> not on the basis of some legal requirement about his earthly ancestry, but by the power of an indestructible life. <sup>17</sup> For it is confirmed by testimony: 'You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.' <sup>18</sup> On the one hand, a previous legal requirement is set aside because it was weak and useless <sup>19</sup> (nothing is made perfect by the law); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God. <sup>20</sup> Now, this did not happen without an oath. Others become priests without such an oath <sup>21</sup> but He became a priest with an oath said by the One who said to Him 'The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, "You are a priest forever."' <sup>22</sup> This means that Jesus has become the guarantor of a much better covenant.

## Review

As we read through Hebrews, we begin to understand more about the priesthood of Jesus. Our passage today continues the long discourse at the centre of this letter which compares Jesus to the Old Testament priests of the ancestral line of Levi and Aaron, and also to the alternative and much earlier priesthood of Melchizedek. You have to be careful when reading this passage

because Jesus is not mentioned until the end, but He is the One being described. Hebrews has already told us that Jesus was not in the ancestral line of Jewish priests (7:11-14), and His life and death were sovereign works of God rather than logical consequence of the laws of the Old Testament, and this theme continues in our passage today (7:18). However, several new things are said about Jesus' work for us as a priest, and each one is important.

Firstly, Hebrews emphasises the everlasting and eternal quality of what Jesus has done. This is what is meant by the phrase 'the power of an indestructible life' (7:16), referring to the fact that no-one can deny what Jesus did in his life and death. This gives us a hint of something more, however, for what Jesus did was to lay down his life sacrificially, and it was something that could never be repeated because He was an individual, God's Son. Early Christians were well aware that the priests in the Temple were constantly repeating sacrifices by killing animals in large numbers every day, fulfilling the commands of the Levitical laws. So much so that it was considered only proper for animals to be ritually killed there for food, and the Temple became a large meat market! Hebrews says that once Jesus had died and been raised, no more sacrifices were necessary. Jesus' life was 'indestructible' (7:16) and 'forever' (7:17,21).

Secondly, Hebrews describes the sacrificial system of the Old Testament as 'weak and useless' (7:18), and the work of Jesus as much 'better' (7:19). In order to explain this, Hebrews tells us that the type of priestly service done by Jesus (similar to that of Melchizedek) was 'confirmed by testimony' (7:17), in other words, supported by Scripture, quoting the passage from Psalm 110 already used previously in the letter (5:6). God's testimony about the Messiah in the Old Testament means that Hebrews can say that Jesus' priestly service gives us a 'better hope' (7:19) of drawing near to God, because it is obviously His will.

The last main feature of this passage comes in verses 20-22 which makes the argument that Old Testament priests in the line of Aaron assumed office with no other justification than their inheritance. Jesus' priestly work for us, however, was established by an oath made by God Himself, which is found if we look at the whole of Psalm 110:4, not just part of it 'The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek"' (Psalm 110:4 – see 7:20). For Hebrews, this was very important. Scripture was their only argument against the Jews who wanted to keep to the Old Testament law.

The end result of this is that Hebrews talks about Jesus as 'the guarantor of a much better covenant' (7:22), and a 'better hope' (7:19); Jesus has done everything necessary for us to obtain access to God, through his own sacrificial death. I find it amazing that after centuries of explaining the Gospel, and all the efforts of Scripture, there are still many people who think of Christian faith as like a great mountain to climb with impossibly high standards to achieve and hurdles to jump. Sometimes the church bends over backwards to try and make itself appear less daunting, and making it appear easy to be a Christian. This will not do. The way is as open and clear as it is possible to be, and the barriers are placed by Satan or by our own sinfulness. Jesus remains open and available to all, and His work is sufficient for all our needs.

## Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Discuss the difference between the Old Testament priesthood and that of Jesus Christ and Melchizedek.
2. What does it mean for us today that Jesus' death can never be repeated? How can we keep it fresh in our minds?
3. Read Psalm 110. What does it say to you about Jesus?

## Discipleship

The many explanations we give about Christ are all genuinely given, but not always successful. Have you, like most people, found yourself on the receiving end of a sermon, for example, which appears to make things more difficult to understand rather than less? Or have you attempted to explain your faith to someone and suddenly realised that they do not understand you! Make sure that you are as clear as possible in your own testimony about Christ. It will help you enormously in your faith.

## Final Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, wash away the sins from which we suffer, and make us clean and worthy to be counted as Yours, we pray. May we then be so filled with joy and happiness that no other temptation can drag us away from You. Thank You Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord! AMEN