

Today's reading - Hebrews 7:25-8:6

Pause:

The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind:
 "You are a priest for ever, in the order of Melchizedek."

Psalm 110:4

Hebrews really helps us link up the Old and New Testaments and shows us the richness and depth of God's plan to establish for himself a new people, made perfect through the atoning work of Jesus. You can feel the excitement building as we read of the contrast between the mortal, fallible priests established according to the law and the eternal, perfect high priest, the Lord Jesus, established by God's oath (see the quote above).

It's worth dwelling on the contrasts, so please forgive me if I list them out in a bit of detail here:

Levitical Priests and High Priests	Jesus as High Priest
Limited access to God: only the high priest and only once a year	Provides full access to God through Christ for all Christians
Weak, sinful; offered sacrifices first for their own sins	Holy, blameless; sacrificed for others
Aaronic ancestry	Order of Melchizedek; power of an indestructible life
Appointed by the law, not God's oath	Appointed by God's oath, after the law
Ineffectual; unable to perfect those who draw near	Saves completely; makes perfect forever
Connected with the old covenant/law	Connected with the new covenant
Many priests	One priest
Temporary service, due to mortality	Permanent service; he lives forever
Offered animal sacrifices	Offered himself
Sacrifices repeated daily, yearly; reminder of sins	Sacrificed once for all; sins cleansed once for all
Standing	Seated
Prototype and foreshadowing	The true reality; the coming of good things
Entered the earthly, man-made sanctuary	Entered the heavenly presence of God
External; ceremonial cleansing; guilt of sin remains	Internal; cleansing of the conscience

As Christians we enjoy all the benefits of Jesus, our great high priest, at all times. His work is done, he has sat down at the right hand of God and intercedes for us, his people. We desperately needed reconciliation with God, atonement and access to him. Jesus graciously gave all of these to each of us, through his sacrifice of himself made once for all upon the cross.

The prototypes and foreshadowings are over, Jesus is the true reality to which everything in the Old Testament was pointing.

So how are we to live, in the light of this truth? Let me suggest a few attributes which we should have:

Confidence: We know the truth about Jesus and have all the benefits of him as our glorious high priest. God really is for us! No-one can possibly resist the will of the Lord's Messiah, his anointed king the Lord Jesus. Let us go about our master's business with determination and confidence. Everything else is a shadow, the reality is in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Obedience: The kingdom of which we are a part is eternal and will come to complete consummation at the time which God has appointed. As we wait patiently for this, let's do our level best to be active in pursuing our Lord's business. He has given us so much, the least we can do in response to his love and grace is to obey him. "If you love me, keep my commands." John 14:15

Joy: The truth of how much we are loved by God and how far his Son, the Lord Jesus, went to save us and rescue us is a cause of much rejoicing. While current circumstances may not be particularly great in the short term, the reality is that our lives should be full of rejoicing at all times, because of the eternal destiny which we have in Christ.

Prayer

Thanks be to thee, my Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits thou hast given me,
for all the pains and insults thou hast borne for me.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know thee more clearly,
love thee more dearly,
and follow thee more nearly, day by day.

Amen