

# Hebrews 7 Lonsdale Square

by John Nelson Darby

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*The sermon explores the transformative nature of Christ's priesthood and its implications for believers in contrast to the old covenant system.*

**Scripture:** Hebrews 7:11

**Topics:** "New Covenant", "Priesthood of Christ"

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## Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the radical transformation of the priesthood and the entire system of worship as revealed in Hebrews 7. He contrasts the priesthood of Melchisedec with the Aaronic priesthood, highlighting that Christ, as the eternal High Priest, has established a new covenant that supersedes the old law. Darby explains the significance of God's names--Almighty, Jehovah, Father, and Most High--and how they relate to our understanding of God and our relationship with Him through Christ. He stresses that through faith in Christ, believers are adopted as sons of God, possessing eternal life and direct access to the Father. The sermon concludes with the assertion that the old system is obsolete, and believers now stand in a new relationship with God, free from the law's condemnation.

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## Transcript

The great point here is the total change of the whole system and order of everything. It is in contrast with the law founded on the priesthood. In shewing this, he takes up this mysterious person who appeared to Abram in the character of priest of the Most High God, not of Jehovah.

In putting Himself into relationship with man, God has taken four distinct names, viz.:

1. Almighty
2. Jehovah
3. Father
4. Most High.

He protects Abram in the character of Almighty. In the bush He takes this name Jehovah - one who never gives up His promises.

To us, He is Father. The Lord says, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world." The name of "Father," carries with it eternal life.

Life and incorruptibility were not brought to light before the Lord came; not that they were not there, for as Son of God, He quickened from Adam, but there was no revelation of eternal life. Eternal life came down in the Person of Christ. "In him was life; and the life was the light of men," "that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us," so that, "he that hath the Son hath life"; and "this is life eternal that they might know thee (the Father), the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

The fourth name is "Most High," possessor of heaven and earth, that will be when He takes to Himself His great power and reigns - all the earth taken into possession.

Ques. Was not the name of "Father" in the Lord's prayer?

It was there, but they could not cry it, though He taught it them and was the Revealer of the Father. Of old the name was used in a very vague way, but there was no individual knowledge of God as such.

We, however, are already the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus. God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son, that we might receive the adoption of sons. Of old, no one ever really got into the place of a son. But the Lord was teaching the disciples according to the revelation of the Son down here, while as yet they had not the Spirit of adoption. It was a transitional time with them.

30 Ques. What is "Abba, Father"?

Merely, "Father, Father." The Lord revealed the name of the Father, but, until He had accomplished redemption, He could not put them into the place of sons, so that they might have the conscious knowledge of it.

But He did reveal the Father.

The same kind of thing runs right through the gospels. The disciples were utterly incapable of entering into what He told them. They had no idea of redemption, nor of the place into which redemption would bring them; but still Christ revealed the Father. "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." They ought to have seen this, but they did not.

"Most High" is the name revealed to Abram when he had conquered. (Notice there is no intercession by Melchisedec.) In Zechariah, Christ takes that character as priest upon His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between them both, i.e., between Jehovah and Christ upon earth.

The revelation of God at each particular period was what faith had to go upon. That makes these names so important; while as for our names they merely distinguish us from one another. So when He wrestled with Jacob, He would not give him His name. In Deuteronomy you find, "Thou shalt be perfect with Jehovah, thy God"; but to us, it is not said, "with," but "be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

"Most High" is when all things are headed up in one, and He has taken possession. It comes out here, but it is not fulfilled yet.

Though Christ is priest after the order of Melchisedec, His priestly service is analogous to that of Aaron. Melchisedec is a mysterious person, a king, too, on earth, both king of righteousness and king of peace.

But as to the present condition of things, the Lord says, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth, but a sword."

Ques. Who was Melchisedec?

Melchisedec.

Ques. Was he Christ?

31 No; because he was "made like unto the Son of God." He is purposely made mysterious.

Ques. What of his descent?

I don't know. He is put there, and that is all I know, with neither beginning of days, nor end of life as to priesthood. The sons of Aaron were limited and began at twenty-five or thirty years old, as they may have been initiated for five years. But that is the contrast.

Ques. What is the normal idea of priesthood?

"To offer gifts and sacrifices," it says in Hebrews.

Ques. Would Noah be one?

Up to Sinai the head of the family seems to have acted as priest both for himself and for his family, but not for other people. Aaron and his sons were mediators. In Exodus, sacrifices were offered by "young men"; but there is no statement of their institution.

Ques. Would Exodus 19:22 and Exodus 24:5 be the same thing?

It is not quite the same occasion, but the "young men" acted as priests.

Melchisedec has nothing to do with all that; he does not offer sacrifices at all, he blesses up, and he blesses down. After the victory of Abram is complete, he blesses him from the Most High God and then he blesses the Most High God.

And Christ abides a priest "continually." It is important to notice that word all through the epistle; it means uninterruptedly - for a continuance.

It is the same in chapter 10:12 for Christ sitting at the right hand of God. He is King of righteousness, and King of peace, but He does not talk about the throne yet. He is constantly a priest and does not give that up to anybody else, and that is the reason it is intransmissible.

Aaron's sons were obliged to transmit their priesthood by reason of death, but Christ's is unchanging and unchangeable.

All this argument is most effectual with a Jew. Great as Aaron was, Melchisedec was greater. And Levi paid tithes in Abram. What he is seeking to shew is that the whole Jewish system must go; it is superseded so that there must be another priest. There would not have been any disannulling of the old thing, if it were to continue. But the priesthood being changed, you must have the whole system changed.

32 None but the sons of Aaron could be priests, but now another priest having arisen, all must be changed.

He is addressing Jews. They would admit the teaching of Psalm 110. Then what becomes of your Aaronic priesthood?

At this moment the new Priest is sitting at the right hand of the Father until His foes be made His footstool. And it is left at that, so that no one can tell when He will come forth fully as Melchisedec. But the Aaronic priesthood is set on one side; and people could not offer anything themselves - could have nothing to say to God, except through the priesthood.

Now in that we have been speaking of God was dealing with man upon the earth; He "spake on earth," He came down here into the tabernacle; God was on the earth and man looked at as living and responsible; therefore God says, "You cannot come near me." He placed a barrier round Sinai, and a vail in the tabernacle.

Most interesting figures there were of things now revealed in Christianity, but man could not then draw near to God. God gave a law of ten commandments, and it was a perfect rule to man as alive in the flesh in this world. He took up the Jewish people for the purpose, but the whole nation turned to idolatry. What more could God have done for that nation than He did?

Nothing. Thus it was with God Himself on the earth, and a priesthood on the earth; and God says, "I will bless you if you behave well."

All this supposes man to be alive on the earth - the cross supposes man to be dead, while in another sense it brings in death to him. And it rends the vail as well. The law treated man as alive and responsible, but never as dead.

Then God came into the world in Christ, and man would not have Him, but crucified Him. And in the death of Christ God was no longer a hidden God. Now death comes and says two things to me: if you are not a believer, you are dead; and, if you are a believer, you have died in Christ, and are now alive unto God in Christ.

So when, in death, Christ had by Himself purged our sins, He "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high", and the vail of the temple was rent in twain.

Ques. You say man was alive and responsible under law, is he not so still?

33 The history of man in responsibility goes on up to the cross; but, since the cross, a man, though individually he goes through the discovery of what he is, is not in a state of probation at all; responsibility in that sense is over. Here is a man who, say, has been trading, and has not a farthing left. It is of no use saying to him, "Take care of your money." He could only say, "I have no money to take care of."

So, as a present thing, when I have really found out my state, I find I am lost. Christ came to seek and to save the lost, not those who are in a state of probation. Still, I personally must go through the learning process.

I see I am lost already, my state is enmity against God; that is a present fact, i.e., in my unconverted state.

Now, when in my enmity I rejected Christ, God gave Christ to cleanse me from it, and I am brought to own this. As a man, I am done with, and I am no more in the flesh, for it was condemned in the cross; but I am clear now, and through the rent veil I go into the holiest as white as snow.

But to return to the Melchisedec priesthood. Christ is not yet acting in that character; His title to it is all clear, but He has not entered upon its exercise; He is exercising His priesthood according to Aaron.

Ques. Is there nothing for us of heavenly blessing through the Melchisedec character?

I know nothing of it. There is nothing now in connection with Melchisedec except patience. Melchisedec is king as well as priest, but he has not yet taken to Him His great power and reigned. The object here is to shew Jews how completely Judaism is set aside. That part of it that contains instruction for us is the Aaronic comparison. When the temple comes, it will be Melchisedec; but in Hebrews it is tabernacle, not temple.

Ques. Does the latter part of verse 19 follow on from verse 18?

The parenthesis is in the words, "For the law made nothing perfect."

Ques. What is the "better hope"?

Christianity. Coming to God by Christ. Confidence in the grace manifested in Christ.

Ques. What is the difference between "law" and "commandments"?

34 None here. None anywhere, except Christ's commandments. Commandments involves not merely doing right, but obedience.

But I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. And then I get another responsibility as a Christian; if I say, I abide in Him, I ought also so to walk, even as He walked. Christ ever manifested God in grace, in all His ways through this world. I am responsible in the place I am set in; but as a man I was totally lost; now, I am in Christ.

Ques. As lost, am I responsible to repent, and believe the gospel?

Oh yes. But such an one has not to walk so as to see whether he can stand in judgment, and he is not under law to Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 9 they have put out of that verse the positive declaration that we are not under law at all. In verse 21 of that chapter it is, "To those without law, as without law, (not as without law to God, but as legitimately subject to Christ), in order that I might gain those without law." There they have kept the saving clause as to himself actually, but in the twentieth verse they have omitted it: "To those under law, as under law, not being myself under law, in order that I might gain those under law." So it should be without a doubt. I suppose they thought it might do mischief, and so left it out?

Ques. Who left it out?

Copyists left it out. But the Sinaitic, Alexandrine and Vatican MSS. have it with C.D.E.F.G., i.e., pretty much all of them. For our version they had not many MSS. Stephens in 1550 had only thirteen at Paris, and perhaps the Beza at Cambridge, though that is doubtful. The Elzevirs in 1635 made some additions to

the text, saying it was received by everybody. They made the two Lord's prayers alike in Luke and Matthew, because they did not like two Lord's prayers.

The English Authorised Version was made in 1611, but the "Textus Receptus" was not issued until 1665.

Ques. Why "Under law to Christ"?

Well, the term should be, "Rightly subject to Christ."

Do not be afraid of the word 'commandment,' only remember it is not mere doing right that is wanted; if we did everything right, nothing would be right, if it was not obedience.

But the moment you put a man under law you put him under condemnation, i.e., if you talk of it as a rule of life. I say it is a rule of death. Have you loved God with all your heart today? No. Then either the law must lose its power, or you are damned.

35 The seventh of Romans is clear enough that you cannot have two husbands at a time. If you are under law, you have not got Christ risen; but if you are in Christ risen, you are not under law. It is important to see clearly that the law has power over a man so long as he lives.

Nor is God's law a merely arbitrary thing. Neither is the Sabbath, for that was instituted when man was created; the law put God's sanction on man's various duties, duties which flowed from his relationships. All these duties had existed prior to the law, but the law was the perfect rule of those duties; on that ground I am lost for ever.

Worse! When Christ came, I would not have Him either.

So now, in the end of the world, the end of all God's moral dealings with the world, Christ did a work which places us on a totally new ground. But then, that is the work which is done - a work by which God is both just and a justifier.

So the question now is, To which MAN do I belong?

I belong to the MAN that is in heaven.

On earth lawless sin was found in the Gentiles; lawbreaking, in Israel; added to this, grace has been refused in Christ; so that now all is over. Only, I have to find this out for myself.

"In the end of the world," i.e., in the end of the dispensations - not dispensation - "in the completion of the ages, Christ hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Consequently I get Christ's work as the ground upon which I already am with God.

Instead of going to the judgment-seat to find it out, I know that I am damned before I go there.

Ques. It says in 1 Peter 4:1, "He that hath suffered in the flesh." What is that?

It is the same in principle as Paul; you cannot get on to the true ground of practice except by reckoning yourself dead. "Ye are dead," because Christ has died, "and your life is hid with Christ in God." I am dead; that is not suffering. If you come to practice, it is "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." If I constantly carry the cross, the flesh never can stir, and nothing but the life of Christ flows out.

36 Peter's is the experimental reckoning self to be dead. There, I arm myself with the same mind. If I always reckoned myself absolutely dead, Satan could do nothing with me whatever.

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In 1 John 1, verse 7 is absolute. I am walking in the light, as God is in the light. We have fellowship one with another. And the blood cleanses from all sin. These are the three parts of Christian standing.

The law takes up the conduct fitting for man as man; but, now the veil is rent, the question is, can I stand in God's presence in the full light, without any veil at all? This is quite another thing. If I can stand there, then I can have to say to God. And I have boldness to enter into the holiest, and the effect of the light is to show me that I am as white as snow.

Ques. Then would you say that every Christian is walking in the light?

Yes, he is walking in it, but I would not say according to it; he may not even know his privileges.

Ques. Would you say that a Christian is walking in darkness when he commits sin?

He would be walking according to darkness.

Ques. Does not John suppose a Christian walking in darkness?

No, never. I get no uncertainty; as being a Christian my walk is in God's light, according to His nature. The passage does not contemplate failure or otherwise.

If any one cannot view such statements abstractly, he will never understand them at all.

Ques. But in Galatians 5:17 it says, "Ye cannot do the things that ye would"?

That is really nonsense, and abominable doctrine, too; the flesh tries to hinder me from walking spiritually; the true reading should be, "So that ye should not do."

Ques. Is being "in Christ" the same thing as having the Holy Ghost?

It is not the same thing, but I know it by the Holy Ghost. "In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you," that is when the Holy Ghost is given.

Ques. It says that Christ as High Priest is "made higher than the heavens"?

Yes, because that is where I must go.

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