

Context:

The preacher is continuing to build up the case for Jesus as the High Priest. In beginning of chapter 7 he had been making the case that Jesus comes in the order of Melchizedek. Then in mid chapter 7, the preacher dropped the Melchizedek case and started making the case of the limits of the Old Testament priesthood as opposed to the eternal priesthood of Jesus.

Verse 19 ends with, "The law made nothing perfect, and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God." This hands us off to verses 20-28

As I read this over and over again I realized how amazing this passage really is, let's get into it!

I. **Heb 7:20-22: Jesus a Priest With an Oath**

And inasmuch as it was not without an oath ²¹ (for they indeed became priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One who said to Him,

*"The Lord has sworn
And will not change His mind,
'You are a priest forever'");*

²² *so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.*

- Verse 20: it was not without an oath. Very simple verse
- The verse starts with Kai which is translated as "and." This is a coordinating conjunction that is called a copulative conjunction. This is a conjunction which connects two equal grammatical units together. Verse 20 is connected to verse 19.
 - This better hope which verse 19 speaks of is connected to an oath which verses 20-22 speak of.
- Verse 21 starts with "for." This is an explanatory conjunction. It is a parenthetical clause substantiating the claim that Jesus is a priest by oath, forever.
- Verse 21 has some contrast in it. They, the Old Testament priests, became priests without an oath, but Jesus had an oath
- The KJV finished verse 21's quote" according to the order of Melchizadek. The other translations don't. We have moved on to Jesus:
- **7.21** εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα {A}

{A} {A} The letter {A} signifies that the text is certain.

Heb 7:20-28

- On the one hand, the omission of the phrase κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ could be explained if the eye of the scribe wandered from κατὰ to the κατὰ that follows Μελχισέδεκ. On the other hand, many scribes would have felt the temptation to add the phrase here (from ver. 17). The Committee judged that the second possibility was much the stronger.¹¹
- Jesus' oath came from God the Father (the One) who said Psalm 110:4
- The Lord has sworn
 - If a person swears it is one thing but this is the Lord who has sworn
 - The Lord will not change His mind
 - Theology teaches that Jesus will be Priest in the New Jerusalem; however, there will no longer be sin. His Priesthood could be through the age of sin. Just a thought?
- Jesus guarantees a better covenant
- John MacArthur says that the Greek Term "Guarantee" is only used here in the New Testament and could also be translated "surety." Jesus, Himself guarantees the success of His new Covenant of Salvation. 7:22 is the first mention of Covenant in this Epistle and it is coupled with one of the key themes of the book: "better."

ESV Study Note:

[Heb. 7:20–21](#) Although God instituted the Levitical priesthood, he did not promise its eternal validity. The priesthood of Jesus rests securely on God's promise/oath (cf. [6:13–20](#)) in [Ps. 110:4](#).

[Heb. 7:22](#) The new, **better covenant** based on Jesus' eternal high priesthood comes with God's oath and with Jesus as the **guarantor**, and thus it is superior to the Mosaic covenant (see further [8:6–13; 9:15; 10:15–18; 12:24; 13:20](#)).

II. Verses 23-28: Greatness of Jesus as High Priest

²³ *The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing,* ²⁴ *but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently.* ²⁵ *Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.*

²⁶ *For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens;* ²⁷ *who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up*

¹ See also G. Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles*, 1953, p. 163.

¹ Metzger, B. M., & United Bible Societies. (1994). *A textual commentary on the Greek New Testament, second edition a companion volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (4th rev. ed.)* (597). London; New York: United Bible Societies.

sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. ²⁸ For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever.

- There continues a contrast with the current Priest, singular, Jesus; and the former priests, plural.
- Verse 23 makes it clear they were in great number because of death.
- **The very thing that caused death, sin, they were atoning for; which kept them from ministering because of death. Jesus, however, never sinned; so He can atone forever.**
- MacArthur notes that it is claimed there were 84 High Priests from the time of Aaron until the Temple's destruction in AD 70. The lesser priests numbers were much larger.
- Verse 24 continues this idea. Jesus is not prevented by death. His priesthood is permanent.
- Permanent is translated from an adjective which literally can mean "untransferably."
- **ἀπαράβατος, ov** strictly *not transient*; hence, of what is fixed and not subject to change *permanent, never changing* (HE 7.24)²
 - Jesus needs not to transfer the priesthood
- Other verses about the priesthood forever: Is 9:7; John 12:34; Rom 9:5; Heb 7:23f, 28
- Verse 25 makes a major inference from the material listed: Jesus can save forever
 - MacArthur notes that this Greek term is only used here and in Luke 13:11
- He can save those who draw near to God
- But we draw near to God through Him
 - Verse 19 initiated this theme of "drawing near to God."
- In 4:16 this theme of drawing near to God was also listed. MacArthur notes how this theme is throughout Hebrews and it is an amazing part of Christianity. Other ancient rulers were unapproachable. **The ESV study Bible also has good notes on this:**

- Jesus "always" lives to make intercession for us!

ESV Study Note:

[Heb. 7:23–25](#) The mortality of the **many** Levitical **priests** is again contrasted with the eternity of Jesus as high priest (see [v. 8](#)). **To the uttermost** does not specify whether completeness in time ("forever") or completeness in extent ("completely") is intended; the Greek *eis to panteles* can mean both. Since a "complete" salvation would endure for all time, and since a salvation "for all time" would eventually include every aspect of life, perhaps the author intends readers to hear both senses. On **draw near to God**, see note on [4:16](#). Jesus Christ **always lives to make intercession** (that is, to bring the requests of believers to the Father; cf. [Rom. 8:34](#)) for those who approach God **through him**. Since the ever-living Christ intercedes for believers, they can have great confidence that they will never perish. In fact, they can know that "all things" in their lives will "work together for good" ([Rom. 8:28](#)), for God the Father will answer the prayers of his Son.

²Friberg, T., Friberg, B., & Miller, N. F. (2000). *Vol. 4: Analytical lexicon of the Greek New Testament*. Baker's Greek New Testament library (61). Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books.

Heb 7:20-28

- Verse 26 uses strong adjectives to describe Jesus as our High Priest
 - Holy:
 - Innocent:
 - undefiled:
- Separated from sinners: **The IVP Bible Backgrounds Commentary:**
7:26. Levitical priests were to avoid defilement, and special precautions were taken to avoid the high priest's defilement before the Day of Atonement. This was the one day a year on which the high priest would enter the holy of holies (although he may have entered several times on that day; cf. Lev 16:13–16). Even though later rabbis' views may be stricter than the actual practice of the Jerusalem high priests, their elaborate care to avoid the high priest's defilement is instructive (he was secluded for the week preceding that day; precautions were taken to avoid a nocturnal emission the night before; etc.). But such earthly high priests could never compare with the heavenly high priest, just as the earthly tabernacle was only a shadow of the perfect one in heaven (see comment on 3:1; 8:1–5).³
 - Exalted above the Heavens
 - Verse 27 continues to modify the High priest. Jesus is still modified
 - Jesus offered up Himself once and for all. He never sinned and so He didn't need to offer sacrifices for His own sins.
 - Verse 28 nicely summarizes:
 - The law appointed men who are weak

ESV Study Notes:

Heb. 7:26 fitting that we should have. Jesus' high priesthood is appropriate and is for the benefit of believers. Several words emphasize Jesus' excellence in terms of his sinlessness (**holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners**; see [4:15](#); also [9:14](#) and [Jer. 11:19](#)) and his heavenly position (**exalted**).

Atonement **Atone, atonement.** The satisfaction of God's anger by venting it on a substitute instead of on the guilty person. Laying down one's life for another was highly regarded in Greek culture; some elements in Judaism came to emphasize that martyrs paid the price for others. But the concept especially derives from one kind of Old Testament sacrifice, in which the death of a sacrifice appeases God's anger so the sinner can be forgiven.

rabbis' ***Rabbi.** Jewish teacher. Sometime after A.D. 70 the term became a technical one for those ordained in the rabbinic movement, which probably consisted primarily of Pharisaic scribes. (To accommodate customary usage this commentary sometimes applies the term to Jewish teachers of the law in general, although such common usage may have technically been later; it also applies the term to the teachings of Jewish legal experts collected in rabbinic literature.)

³Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (Heb 7:26). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

Heb 7:20-28

Heb. 7:27 Multiple points of contrast are made between the Levitical high priests and Jesus as the one eternal high priest (see [chart](#)).

Heb. 7:28 The law in its weakness ([vv. 18–19](#)) appoints sinful mortal **men in their weakness** to be a continuous succession of **high priests** ([vv. 23–24](#)). God, however, made an **oath** ([Ps. 110:4](#)), promising an eternal high priest ([Heb. 7:20–22](#)). This oath through David came after the Mosaic law and sets aside the previous Mosaic priesthood by appointing the messianic **Son of God** ([1:1–14; 5:5–10](#)) as eternal high priest. **made perfect**. See [5:9](#) and note on [5:9–10](#).