

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 310 – November 6th – Hebrews 7:15-28

Works frequently referenced in these notes on Hebrews

Bruce, FF	<i>The Epistle to the Hebrews</i> , Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1964
Guthrie, Donald	<i>Hebrews</i> (Tyndale Commentary), IVP, Leicester, 1983
Hughes, Philip Edgcombe	<i>A Commentary on The Epistle to the Hebrews</i> , Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1977
Westcott, BF	<i>The Epistle to the Hebrews</i> , Macmillan, London, 1889

Verses 15-19

An exposition of the imperfections of the Levitical order.

Verse 15

Καὶ περισσότερον ἔτι κατάδηλόν ἐστιν, εἰ κατὰ τὴν ὁμοιότητα Μελχισέδεκ ἀνίσταται ἱερεὺς ἕτερος,

περισσοτερος, α, ον adj more, much more
ἐτι see v.11

καταδηλος, ον very evident

This word occurs here alone in the NT

ὁμοιοτης, ητος f likeness, similarity
ἀνίσταται Verb, pres midd indic, 3 s
ἀνιστημι see v.11

Verse 16

ὃς οὐ κατὰ νόμον ἐντολῆς σαρκίνης γέγονεν ἀλλὰ κατὰ δύναμιν ζωῆς ἀκαταλύτου,

ἐντολη, ης f command

σαρκινος, η, ον fleshly, belonging to this world

So termed because it was concerned with the externalities of religion – the physical descent of the priests; a physical temple etc.

γένονεν Verb, perf act indic, 3s γινομαι

ζωη, ης f life

ἀκαταλυτος, ον indestructible, without end

"There is a double contrast between 'law' and 'power' and between 'commandment of flesh' and the 'indissoluble life'... The possession of the indissoluble life is not only the characteristic of Christ's exercise of His priestly office: it is the ground on which he enters upon it. Other priests were made priests by virtue of special ordinance: He was made priest in virtue of His inherent nature. He could be, as none other, victim at once and priest."
Westcott

Verse 17

μαρτυρεῖται γὰρ ὅτι Σὺ ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ.

μαρτυρεω bear witness, testify

αἰων, αἰωνος m age, eternity

The Aaronic priesthood itself is described as "an everlasting priesthood" (Ex 40:15; Jer 33:18), but no individual member of the priesthood is described as an everlasting priest.

On the phrase κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ Hughes writes, "There is, however, no more than a *likeness* between Christ and Melchizedek, a likeness which is suggested by the mysterious silence of the Genesis narrative concerning the birth and death and the parentage and posterity of Melchizedek. Within this setting, the figure of Melchizedek is a semblance or shadow, a signpost pointing to someone greater than himself. He is like a primeval John the Baptist who testifies in effect: 'After me comes one who ranks before me, for he was before me' (Jn 1:30). The *reality* foreshadowed by Melchizedek is Christ, the one who is *for ever*, first, because he is the eternal Son, and, second, because by his incarnation and sacrifice of himself he *has become* mankind's high priest, who by the power of his resurrection from the dead and the glory of his exaltation to the right hand of the Majesty on high has redeemed and raised up with himself our fallen nature. He who died once for us now lives, never again to die (Rom 1:4; 6:9; 1 Cor 15:20). The crown has followed the cross, and it is this *power of an indestructible life* which guarantees that he is indeed our priest *for ever*."

Verse 18

ἀθέτησις μὲν γὰρ γίνεται προαγούσης ἐντολῆς διὰ τὸ αὐτῆς ἀσθενὲς καὶ ἀνωφελές,

ἀθετησις, εως f nullification, abrogation

Occurs in the NT only here and in 9:26. A legal term for an annulment.

προαγω go before; ptc. foregoing, former
ἐντολη, ης f see v.16

Particularly the legislation regarding the
levitical priesthood and associated sacrifices.

ἀσθενής, ες sick, weak, helpless
ἀνωφελής, ες useless(ness)

The law offers no help.

Verse 19

οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐτελείωσεν ὁ νόμος, ἐπεισαγωγή δὲ
κρείττονος ἐλπίδος, δι' ἧς ἐγγίζομεν τῷ θεῷ.

τελειοῶ make perfect

Particularly the sacrificial system.

ἐπεισαγωγή, ης f bringing in

ἐπεισαγωγή δε – the completion of the μεν ...
δε phrase begun in verse 18 concerning the
abrogation of the old.

κρείττων and κρείσσων, ον gen ονος
better; greater, superior

"The comparison is between the
commandment characteristic of the Law and
the hope characteristic of the Gospel; and not
between the temporal hope of the Law and the
spiritual hope of the Gospel." Westcott

ἐλπίς, ιδος f hope

ἐγγίζω approach, draw near

The comments of Bruce are helpful here. He
says, "The psalmist who cried 'Blessed is he
whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is
covered; blessed is the man unto whom the
Lord imputeth not iniquity' (Ps 32:1f) knew the
blessedness of a peaceful conscience; and his
colleague who said, 'It is good for me to draw
near unto God' (Ps 73:28), knew that access to
the divine presence was always available to the
man of faith. But these experiences had
nothing to do with the Levitical ritual or the
Aaronic priesthood. The whole apparatus of
worship associated with that ritual and
priesthood was calculated rather to keep men
at a distance from God than to bring them near.
But the 'hope set before us' in the Gospel is
better because it accomplishes this very thing
that was impossible under the old ceremonial;
it enables Christians to 'draw nigh unto God.'
Cf. Rom 8:3.

Calvin comments, "The person who still holds
to or wishes to restore the shadows of the law
not only obscures the glory of Christ but also
deprives us of a tremendous blessing, in that he
puts a distance between us and God, to
approach whom freedom has been granted in
the gospel."

Verse 20

Καὶ καθ' ὅσον οὐ χωρὶς ὀρκωμοσίας (οἱ μὲν
γὰρ χωρὶς ὀρκωμοσίας εἰσὶν ἱερεῖς γεγονότες,

As in the case of the promise to Abraham (cf.
6:13ff.), so with priesthood after the order of
Melchizedek (Ps 110:4), the promise was
accompanied by an oath. Hughes comments,
"It is a matter of exceptional significance that
the covenant with Abraham and the declaration
concerning the priestly order of Melchizedek
were both confirmed by God with an oath, for
under these two heads all the gracious
promises and prophecies which precede the
coming of Christ are gathered, and with the
coming of Christ both the evangelical covenant
and the evangelical priesthood burst into
fulfilment."

ὅσος, η, ον correlative pronoun, as much as
χωρὶς prep with gen without, apart from
ὀρκωμοσία, ας f oath, taking of an oath

"The Law is an expression of the sovereign
power of God who requires specific obedience:
the oath implies a purpose of love not to be
disturbed by man's unworthiness." Westcott

γεγονότες Verb, perf act ptc, m nom pl
γίνομαι

Verse 21

ὁ δὲ μετὰ ὀρκωμοσίας διὰ τοῦ λέγοντος πρὸς
αὐτόν· Ὁμοσεν κύριος, καὶ οὐ
μεταμεληθήσεται, Σὺ ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα),

ὤμοσεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s ὁμνυῶ and
ὁμνυμι swear, make an oath
μεταμεληθήσεται Verb, fut pass dep indic, 3 s
μεταμελομαι change one's mind

Because no oath was attached to the Aaronic
priesthood, so it could be annulled. But, in
contrast concerning the Melchizedekian
priesthood, God has sworn and will not go
back on his word.

Verse 22

κατὰ τοσοῦτο κρείττονος διαθήκης γέγονεν
ἔγγυος Ἰησοῦς.

τοσοῦτος, αὐτη, οὐτον / ουτο correlative adj
so much

κρείττων see v.19

διαθήκη, ης covenant

A passing mention of 'covenant' before turning
to consider the theme in chapter 8.

γένονεν Verb, perf act indic, 3s γίνομαι
ἔγγυος, ου m guarantor, guarantee

Only here in the NT. The term was common in
legal and promissory notes of the period. "The
ἔγγυος undertakes weightier responsibility than
the μεσιτής, he is answerable for the fulfilment
of the obligation which he guarantees." Bruce

"Jesus – the Son of man – having entered into the presence of God for man is the sure pledge of the validity of the New Covenant ... A surety for the most part pledges himself that something will be: but here the Ascended Christ witnesses that something is: the assurance is not simply of the future but of that which is present though unseen." Westcott

Verse 23

Καὶ οἱ μὲν πλείονές εἰσιν γεγονότες ἱερεῖς διὰ τὸ θανάτῳ κωλύεσθαι παραμένειν·

πλειων, πλειον οἱ πλεον more, many, a larger number

γεγονότες see v.20

θανατος, ου m death

κωλυω hinder, prevent

παραμενω remain, continue in office

Verse 24

ὁ δὲ διὰ τὸ μένειν αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ἀπαράβατον ἔχει τὴν ἱεροσύνην·

μενω remain, stay, abide

ἀπαραβατος, ον permanent, untransferable

Westcott says that this word implies that "Christ's Priesthood is His alone, open to no rival claims, liable to no invasion of its function.

ἱεροσυνη, ης f see v.11

Verse 25

ὅθεν καὶ σώζειν εἰς τὸ παντελές δύναται τοὺς προσερχομένους δι' αὐτοῦ τῷ θεῷ, πάντοτε ζῶν εἰς τὸ ἐντυγχάνειν ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν.

ὅθεν therefore, for which reason

σωζω save, rescue

παντελης, ες complete; εἰς το π. fully, completely, forever

"The salvation wrought by Christ reaches to the last element of man's nature and man's life." Westcott

δυναμαι can, be able to

προσερχομαι come or go to, approach

παντοτε always

ζαω live, be alive

ἐντυγχανω turn to (God on behalf of), plead, appeal

"He pleads our cause with the Father (1 John 2:1 παρακλητος), and makes the prayers heard which we know not how to shape." Westcott. And the Father most willingly answers these prayers, cf. Rom 8:37.

"His eternal session in heaven, since his ascension, results in the ceaseless maintenance of this priestly ministry ... His intercession is not the humble prayer of a suppliant, but the confident plea of an advocate. Aaron bore the names of the children of Israel on the breastplate of judgement when he went into the Holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually (Ex 28:29). But Jesus, the high priest of the heavenly sanctuary, lives for ever to intercede for all time with God himself."

Montefiore

It is impossible to pray for someone and, at the same time, to forget them. Christ is able to save because he has his people always and individually at the centre of his thoughts.

Verses 26-28

These verses focus on the perfection of Jesus' high priesthood and his self-offering, preparing the way for an exposition of the heavenly sanctuary (chapter 8) and of Jesus' self-sacrifice (chapters 9-10).

Verse 26

Τοιοῦτος γὰρ ἡμῖν καὶ ἔπρεπεν ἀρχιερεὺς, ὅσιος, ἄκακος, ἀμίαντος, κεχωρισμένος ἀπὸ τῶν ἀμαρτωλῶν, καὶ ὑψηλότερος τῶν οὐρανῶν γενόμενος·

τοιουτος, αυτη, ουτον correlative pronoun and adjective such, of such kind

πρεπει impers verb it is fitting, it is proper

Τοιοῦτος γὰρ ἡμῖν καὶ ἔπρεπεν ἀρχιερεὺς 'such a high priest exactly befitted us,' "that is to say, answered exactly to the requirements of the predicament in which we, as fallen creatures, were placed." Hughes.

Cf 2:10. Jesus has inherent fitness for the office of Mediator unlike the Levitical priests who were ritually made fit.

ὅσιος, α, ον holy

Westcott says that ἅγιος marks consecration, devotion; ὅσιος marks a particular moral position. Hughes remarks that this adjective has specifically messianic connotations in the thought of the apostles reflecting Ps 16:10 (see Acts 2:27; 13:35).

ἀκακος, ον innocent

ἀμίαντος, ον pure, undefiled, unstained

Some suggest that these qualities describe Christ respectively in relation to God, to other men and to himself. These qualities were necessary for him to offer the sacrifice of *himself* on our behalf (v.27).

κεχωρισμένος Verb, perf pass ptc, m nom s

χωριζω separate; pass. separate

oneself, be separated

ἀμαρτωλος, ον sinful, sinner

"The complete separation of the Lord from sinners which was realised through His life (John 14:30) was openly established by His victory over death at the Resurrection (Acts 2:24); and that victory is the foundation of His present work." Westcott.

Hughes underlines that this is not a quasi-physical separation, for "the epistle as a whole ... emphasises *nearness* rather than remoteness... The separateness of Christ from sinners of which our author speaks here points rather to his separation from that which constitutes them sinners, namely their sin." Calvin similarly says, "He is described as separated from us not because he rejects us from his society, but because he is uniquely distinguished from us in that he is free from all defilement."

ὕψηλότερος, α, ον higher, above
(comparative of ὕψηλος)

οὐρανός, ου m heaven

This also is an element that enables him to be the high priest we need for he is our mediator in the presence of God.

Verse 27

ὃς οὐκ ἔχει καθ' ἡμέραν ἀνάγκην, ὥσπερ οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς, πρότερον ὑπὲρ τῶν ἰδίων ἀμαρτιῶν θυσίας ἀναφέρειν, ἔπειτα τῶν τοῦ λαοῦ (τοῦτο γὰρ ἐποίησεν ἐφάπαξ ἑαυτὸν ἀνελέγκαστος):

ἀνάγκη, ης f necessity

ὥσπερ as, just as

πρότερον adv προτερον first of all

ἴδιος, α, ον one's own

ἀμαρτία, ας f sin

θυσία, ας f sacrifice

ἀναφέρω offer (of sacrifice)

Many commentators object that the High priest only offered up sacrifices for himself and then for the rest of the community *once a year* on the day of atonement. Hughes considers the suggestion that these words may reflect first century practice but, having considered this and several other interpretations, concludes, "It is perhaps best to suppose that our author is speaking both generally and particularly in this verse, in such a way that when he says 'daily' he has in mind the complex daily sacrificial routine performed by high priest as well as priests, whereas when he says 'first for his own sins and then for those of the people' his thought is moving from the general to the particular, and is in fact beginning to focus on that great festival which was the annual consummation of the whole sacrificial system. Certainly, from now on, the centre of interest becomes the significance of the entry of our Melchizedek into the heavenly holy of holies once for all, in fulfilment of the typology of the entry of the Aaronic high priest into the earthly holy of holies once a year, and his opening of the way for us into the divine presence, in contrast to the Levitical dispensation under which the people were totally excluded from the innermost sanctuary."

ἔπειτα then, afterwards

λαός, ου m people, a people

ἐφάπαξ adv. once for all time

This, and its simpler form *ἀπαξ* are central concepts in this epistle. Taken together these words occur 11 times. *ἐφάπαξ* is the more emphatic form.

ἑαυτός, ἑαυτή, ἑαυτόν him/her/itself

ἀνελέγκαστος Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s

ἀναφέρω

Verse 28

ὁ νόμος γὰρ ἀνθρώπους καθίστησιν ἀρχιερεῖς ἔχοντας ἀσθένειαν, ὁ λόγος δὲ τῆς ὀρκωμοσίας τῆς μετὰ τὸν νόμον υἱόν, εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τετελειωμένον.

καθίστημι and καθιστανώ put in charge, appoint

ἀσθενεία, ας f weakness

"This 'weakness' includes both the actual limitations of humanity as it is, and the personal imperfections and sins of the particular priest." Westcott.

Hughes comments, "Because of their weakness these former high priests were incapable of making an atonement infinite in worth and eternal in its effect."

ὀρκωμοσία, ας f see v.20

Cf. Ps 110:4.

μετὰ τὸν νόμον i.e. showing the imperfection of the law in that the oath instituted another priesthood.

υἱὸν The theme of the Son is central to this epistle, cf. 1:1,5,8,13; 3:5 etc. Part of the contrast here is between the plural ἄνθρωπος and the singular υἱὸν.

τελειωμένον Verb, perf pass ptc, m acc & n
nom/acc s τελειῶ make perfect

"This verse condenses and recapitulates within the briefest possible compass the main themes of the epistle up to this point." Hughes.