

deSilva, Hebrews, Session 7a, Resources from Notebooklm

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of deSilva, Hebrews, Session 7a, Hebrews 7:1-8:13: Better Priesthood, Better Covenant (Part 1), Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. David deSilva's lecture on Hebrews 7-8 examines the superiority of Jesus' priesthood over the Levitical priesthood. **The lecture explores** Melchizedek's significance as a prefiguration of Jesus, highlighting Melchizedek's characteristics (**eternal, without genealogy**) to contrast with the Levitical priests. **DeSilva analyzes** how Jesus' sacrifice transcends the limitations of the old covenant, **offering a superior atonement** and establishing a better covenant through God's oath and Jesus' indestructible life. The lecture also **touches upon** the historical context of sacrificial atonement in Second Temple Judaism.

2. 27-minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. deSilva's, Hebrews, Session 7a – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → General Epistles → Hebrews).



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3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. David A. deSilva's "Hebrews, Session 7a":

Briefing Document: Hebrews 7:1-8:13 - Better Priesthood, Better Covenant (Part 1)

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Executive Summary

This document analyzes Dr. David A. deSilva's lecture on Hebrews 7:1-8:13, focusing on the author of Hebrews' argument for Jesus as a superior high priest in the line of Melchizedek, surpassing the Levitical priesthood and ushering in a new, better covenant. The core argument revolves around demonstrating the limitations of the old covenant and the perfection and permanence offered through Jesus' priesthood and sacrifice. The analysis includes the use of scriptural interpretation, typological reasoning, and rhetorical strategies to establish Jesus' supremacy.

Key Themes & Ideas

1. The Significance of Melchizedek's Priesthood:

- The author of Hebrews uses the figure of Melchizedek from Genesis 14 to establish a priestly lineage superior to that of Aaron and the Levites.
- Melchizedek's name (King of Righteousness) and title (King of Peace) are interpreted as Messianic pointers, aligning him with the characteristics of God's Messiah.
- Melchizedek's lack of genealogy, birth record, and death record are interpreted as representing his pre-existence and eternal nature, making him a type of the eternal Son of God. *"Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, being likened to the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually."*
- Unlike the Levitical priesthood, which was based on biological descent, Melchizedek's priesthood is based on preexistence and eternal existence. *"This priesthood after the line of Melchizedek is established on something other than biological descent... The defining mark of the priestly line of Melchizedek becomes preexistence and existence into eternity."*

1. Melchizedek's Superiority Over Levi:

- The author argues Melchizedek's superiority through several points:
- Abraham's tithing to Melchizedek is seen as an act of acknowledging Melchizedek's priestly authority, superior to that of the Levites who tithe their own equals. *"Here, the one without a pedigree from them tithed Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises."*
- Melchizedek's blessing of Abraham implies Melchizedek's superiority, as the greater typically blesses the lesser. *"Without any contradiction, the inferior party is blessed by the superior party."*
- Melchizedek's representation of an immortal priest is contrasted with the mortality of the Levitical priests. *"Here, mortal people... received tithes, but there it is testified that he lives."*
- Levi, through Abraham, "paid a tithe" to Melchizedek, demonstrating that the Levitical priesthood is subordinate to the Melchizedekian one. *"...so to speak, Levi, who received tithes, paid a tithe through Abraham, for Levi was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him."*

1. Limitations of the Levitical Priesthood & the Law:

- The Levitical priesthood could not achieve "perfection," defined as the cleansing of the conscience to allow people to approach God directly. *"This perfection did not come to the people by means of the Levitical priesthood... The Levitical priests were not able to cleanse the conscience of the worshipers and bring them to a state in which they could stand in the very presence of God."*
- The Levitical priesthood is seen as inadequate to bring people into the eternal, heavenly realm of God's presence. *"As the Torah and its priesthood could not so work upon the worshiper so as to be able to usher him or her into God's presence in the temple... the law and its priesthood are unable to lead human beings into God's real presence, into the heavenly temple."*
- The author argues that the very appointment of a priest in Melchizedek's line implies the failure of the Levitical priesthood to complete God's assignment for them. *"The announcement of a new line of priests in Psalm 110, the more recent text, implies the failure of the old existing line of priests established in the Torah to complete God's assignment for them to perfect the worshipers."*

- Because the Levitical priesthood and the Mosaic Law were intertwined, a change in priesthood *necessitates* a change of Law. *"With the priesthood being changed, there is also, by necessity, a change of law."*

1. Jesus as the Superior High Priest:

- Jesus' priestly appointment is not based on genealogy but on the "power of an indestructible life" demonstrated by his resurrection. *"...it is still more abundantly clear since another priest has risen up in the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become such not in accordance with the law, a carnal commandment, but in accordance with the power of an indestructible life."*
- Jesus is the guarantor of a "better covenant" because his priesthood is guaranteed by God's oath (Psalm 110:4) and by his unending life. *"By this decree, Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant." "Because of this, he is able to rescue those who are drawing near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession on their behalf."*
- Jesus' one-time sacrifice of himself is superior to the repeated sacrifices of the Levitical priests. *"For this, he did once and for all, having offered himself..."*
- Jesus' holiness and blamelessness, in contrast to the sinfulness of Levitical priests, give him an unimpeded relationship with God. *"For such a high priest was fitting for us, one who is holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens..."*

1. The Nature of Perfection & Access to God:

- Perfection is not merely adherence to ritual but a cleansing of conscience, allowing direct access to God. *"One thing that we can say is that perfection means the cleansing of the conscience from the defilement of sin so that the human being may approach God face to face..."*
- The author contrasts the imperfect access to God through the earthly temple with the perfect access offered by Jesus in the heavenly realm.

1. Theological Context of Atoning Sacrifice:

- The lecture notes that the idea of a human death atoning for sins is not in the Torah, which prohibits human sacrifice.
- This concept is developed in early Judaism under the influence of Greco-Roman ideas, combined with existing Jewish traditions (Leviticus 17:11 on blood

atonement, Deuteronomistic theology of obedience, and the servant song of Isaiah).

- The martyr theology of 2 & 4 Maccabees is highlighted, where the obedient deaths of martyrs are understood as atoning for the sins of the nation, connecting obedience to the reversal of curses in Deuteronomy. *"Be merciful to your people and let our punishment suffice for them. Make my blood their purification and take my life in exchange for theirs."*

Rhetorical Strategies

- **Comparison & Contrast:** The author uses a consistent strategy of comparing and contrasting the Levitical priesthood and the priesthood of Melchizedek/Jesus to emphasize the superiority of the latter.
- **Scriptural Interpretation:** The author relies heavily on scriptural interpretation of passages from Genesis, Psalms, and Jeremiah to support his claims.
- **Typology:** Melchizedek is presented as a "type" of Jesus, with various aspects of his character and story being used to foreshadow Jesus' priesthood and ministry.
- **Rhetorical Questions:** The author uses rhetorical questions to guide the audience to his desired conclusions.
- **Inclusio:** The author uses the device of an inclusio by highlighting the idea of perfection at both the beginning and end of a section, emphasizing its importance.

Implications & Consequences

- **Shift in Covenant:** The arrival of Jesus as the high priest in the line of Melchizedek signifies a fundamental shift from the old covenant to a new and better covenant.
- **Superior Access to God:** Believers now have access to God through a superior mediator, one who is both fully human and fully divine.
- **Eternal Hope:** The priesthood of Jesus offers an eternal hope based on an indestructible life and his continuous intercession on behalf of his followers.
- **Reorientation of Focus:** The author is attempting to reorient the focus of his audience from earthly, temporary benefits to heavenly, eternal ones, using the superiority of Jesus to persuade.

Conclusion

Dr. deSilva's lecture provides a detailed analysis of the author of Hebrews' argument for the superiority of Jesus' priesthood. This argument hinges on the typological figure of Melchizedek, demonstrating the inherent limitations of the Levitical system and establishing the basis for a more complete and permanent relationship with God through Christ. The lecture highlights the strategic use of scriptural interpretation and rhetorical devices to construct a compelling case for Jesus as the ultimate high priest and mediator of a new and better covenant.

4. Hebrews Study Guide: 7a, Hebrews 7:1-8:13, Better Priesthood, Better Covenant (Part 1)

Hebrews: A Study Guide for Chapters 7-8

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. According to the author of Hebrews, what is the significance of Jesus being a high priest in the line of Melchizedek?
2. How does the author of Hebrews demonstrate the superiority of Melchizedek's priesthood compared to that of the Levitical priests?
3. What role does genealogy play in the author's argument about the priestships of Melchizedek and Levi?
4. How does the author use the story of Abraham and Melchizedek in Genesis 14 to support the claim of Melchizedek's superiority?
5. What does the author of Hebrews mean by "perfection" and how does it relate to the Levitical priesthood?
6. What does the author suggest about the interconnectedness between the Levitical priesthood and the Mosaic law?
7. How does the resurrection of Jesus factor into the author's argument about the change in priesthood?
8. According to the author, what two main reasons make the new covenant a better bond than the old one?
9. What does the author mean by Jesus being a "guarantor of a better covenant"?
10. How does the author of Hebrews contrast the sacrifice of Jesus with the sacrifices of the Levitical priests?

Answer Key

1. The significance lies in Melchizedek's priesthood being more distinguished than Aaron's, suggesting a superior priestly line and a new order of priesthood, not based on genealogy but on an indestructible life. This makes Jesus' priesthood unique and transformative.

2. The author uses Melchizedek's lack of genealogy, his dual role as both king and priest, and the fact that Abraham tithed to and was blessed by him to argue for Melchizedek's superiority, thereby reflecting the greater dignity of Jesus' priesthood.
3. Genealogy is central to the Levitical priesthood, establishing their right to priestly office through biological descent. In contrast, the priesthood of Melchizedek transcends genealogy, being based on an indestructible life.
4. Abraham's tithing to Melchizedek and receiving Melchizedek's blessing demonstrates Melchizedek's superiority because Abraham was the ancestor of the Levites, meaning that the Levitical priesthood was subordinate to Melchizedek's.
5. "Perfection" means the cleansing of the conscience from sin's defilement, enabling direct access to God. The Levitical priesthood could not achieve this, but Jesus' priesthood does, highlighting its superiority.
6. The Levitical priesthood and the Mosaic Law were interconnected; the priesthood maintained the covenant and mediated rituals, while the covenant established the priesthood's rules and authority, and the two rose and fell together.
7. Jesus' resurrection demonstrates his possession of an indestructible life, a key quality of the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek, and confirms his appointment as high priest. It also shows that he transcends death.
8. The new covenant is better due to God's oath swearing in a priest after the order of Melchizedek and Jesus' indestructible life, which guarantees his priesthood's continuity. The first was based on a contract, the second on a divine oath.
9. Jesus is the guarantor because God swore an oath making him a priest forever, demonstrating God's unchanging will. This oath gives the new covenant an infallible foundation and guarantees its reliability for believers.
10. The author contrasts the repeated, ineffective Levitical sacrifices with Jesus' single, perfect sacrifice, which fully reconciles people with God. This illustrates the superiority of Jesus' sacrifice in cleansing sin once and for all.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Answer these questions in a well-structured essay format.

1. Analyze the author of Hebrews' use of the figure of Melchizedek. In what ways does the author construct Melchizedek as a type or foreshadowing of Jesus, and how does this typological interpretation serve the author's overall argument about the superiority of Christ's priesthood?
2. Discuss the concept of "perfection" in the book of Hebrews, particularly as it relates to the Levitical priesthood and the priesthood of Jesus. How does the author use this concept to argue for the superiority of the new covenant established through Christ?
3. The author of Hebrews argues for a change in the law and priesthood. Detail the author's arguments for this change and how this change is related to the concept of a "better hope" for believers.
4. Explore the author's use of the idea of sacrifice in this section of Hebrews. How does the author build on existing Jewish traditions surrounding the sacrificial system and how does the sacrifice of Jesus differ from the sacrifices performed under the Levitical system?
5. Examine the background of early Jewish ideas about voluntary death on behalf of others, as the author touches on in Hebrews, and discuss how those ideas inform an understanding of the significance of the death of Jesus.

Glossary

Atonement: The act of making amends for sin or wrongdoing, restoring a broken relationship, especially between God and humanity.

Covenant: A binding agreement or promise, typically between God and humanity. In the Hebrew Bible, the covenant of God with Moses is particularly important, and this is often called the Mosaic or Sinaitic covenant.

Genealogy: A line of descent traced continuously from an ancestor, particularly important in establishing the legitimacy of Levitical priests.

High Priest: The chief priest in Judaism, responsible for officiating sacred rites and mediating between God and the people.

Inclusion: A literary device where a passage begins and ends with the same word or concept.

Indestructible Life: A life that is not subject to death or decay, a key attribute of Jesus' priesthood after the order of Melchizedek.

Levitical Priesthood: The priesthood in ancient Israel, composed of descendants from the tribe of Levi.

Melchizedek: A king and priest from the Old Testament, used in Hebrews as a type of Christ, whose priesthood is not based on genealogy but on an indestructible life.

Mosaic Law: The law given to Moses on Mount Sinai, which includes religious and civil regulations; otherwise known as the Torah or Sinaitic covenant.

Perfection: The state of being complete, whole, and without blemish, particularly in relation to moral and spiritual purity, which is achieved by being in God's presence.

Psalms 110: A key Old Testament text cited in Hebrews, which prophesies a king and priest in the line of Melchizedek, applied to Jesus in the New Testament.

Sacrifice: An offering to God, often involving the shedding of blood, to atone for sins or express gratitude, often presented by the priests as mediators.

Second Temple Period: The period in Jewish history between the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem (c. 516 BCE) and its destruction by the Romans (70 CE).

Torah: The first five books of the Hebrew Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). In the context of Hebrews, it often implies the entire Mosaic Law.

5. FAQs on DeSilva, Hebrews, Session 7a, Hebrews 7:1-8:13, Better Priesthood, Better Covenant (Part 1), Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ: Understanding the Superiority of Jesus' Priesthood in Hebrews

- **What is the significance of Jesus being a high priest in the line of Melchizedek, and how does this differ from the Levitical priesthood?**
- The author of Hebrews argues that Jesus' priesthood, based on the order of Melchizedek, is superior to the Levitical priesthood, which is descended from Aaron. Melchizedek is portrayed as a figure without a recorded lineage, birth, or death, symbolizing an eternal, pre-existent priesthood. Unlike the Levitical priests whose priesthood was based on genealogy and hereditary succession, Jesus' priesthood is based on His indestructible life and divine appointment, which is established by an oath from God (Psalm 110:4). This highlights that Jesus' priesthood transcends the limitations and impermanence of the Levitical system.
- **How does the author of Hebrews use the story of Melchizedek in Genesis 14 to support his claims about Jesus?**
- The author draws parallels between Melchizedek and Jesus, emphasizing several key points from the Genesis 14 account. First, Melchizedek is described as both "King of Righteousness" and "King of Peace," titles associated with the Messiah. Second, Melchizedek's lack of a recorded genealogy and life span is seen as a prefiguration of Jesus' eternal nature and divine origin. Finally, the fact that Abraham, the ancestor of Levi, paid tithes to Melchizedek and received his blessing highlights Melchizedek's superiority over Levi, and therefore, the Melchizedekian priesthood's superiority over the Levitical one.
- **What does the concept of "perfection" mean in the context of Hebrews, and how does this relate to Jesus' priesthood?**
- In Hebrews, "perfection" refers to the cleansing of one's conscience from sin, enabling direct access to God. The author emphasizes that the Levitical priesthood and its sacrifices were unable to achieve this perfection, primarily due to their repetitive nature, their dependence on mortal priests and their inability to cleanse the conscience. Jesus' single, perfect sacrifice, and His eternal priesthood, are presented as the means through which believers can attain this

state of perfection, as he can actually bring a person into God's presence, which the earthly temple merely symbolized.

- **How does the author of Hebrews argue that the Mosaic covenant and the Levitical priesthood were being replaced by a new covenant and priesthood?**
- The author argues that the establishment of a priesthood in the order of Melchizedek implies the obsolescence of the Levitical priesthood and the Mosaic covenant. He uses Psalm 110:4, where God swears an oath appointing a priest after the order of Melchizedek, and he claims that because this came hundreds of years after the Levitical system, it indicates God's intention for something better. The author also emphasizes the limitations of the Law and the inability of the Levitical system to perfect the conscience. These inadequacies are what necessitate a new covenant mediated by Jesus. The author also cites Jeremiah 31:31-34 as evidence of a promised new covenant.
- **Why does the author of Hebrews emphasize that Jesus' priesthood is based on an "indestructible life"?**
- The concept of an "indestructible life" is central to the argument for Jesus' superior priesthood. The Levitical priests were mortal, which meant their service was interrupted by death and that their offerings had to be repeated due to their impermanence. Jesus, by contrast, is not subject to death, and He is able to continuously perform His priestly duties. This quality of an eternal priesthood means that His intercession on behalf of believers is constant and reliable, and his sacrifice need never be repeated because it had eternal significance.
- **What is the significance of Jesus' death in the context of the arguments presented in Hebrews?**
- Jesus' death, according to Hebrews, is presented as a single, perfect, and non-repeatable sacrifice that is far superior to the repeated sacrifices of the Levitical system. It was not merely a death, but an act of obedience that was also meant to be the ultimate atoning sacrifice for sins. Because it is Jesus' own life that is sacrificed, it does not suffer the problems of the animal sacrifices and also demonstrates his commitment to his followers. This sacrifice accomplishes the cleansing of consciences that the law cannot provide, thereby bringing about reconciliation between humanity and God. His death also makes possible a new covenant founded on better promises.

- **What role does God's oath play in ensuring the reliability of the new covenant mediated by Jesus?**
- The author highlights that Jesus' priesthood is established not only through a divine appointment but also through God's oath (Psalm 110:4). This oath signifies the unchangeable nature of God's commitment to this new priestly order and covenant. The oath contrasts with the fragility of the previous covenant, which relied on human priests. God's oath is presented as an assurance that the new covenant and the priestly work of Jesus is permanent and reliable. This provides a basis for faith that the new covenant will fulfill all God's purposes for His people.
- **How does the author of Hebrews draw on existing Jewish thought and traditions regarding sacrifice and atonement to explain Jesus' sacrifice?**
- The author connects Jesus' death to existing traditions of Jewish thought about atonement and sacrifice. While the Torah prohibits human sacrifice, it also connects blood with atonement (Leviticus 17:11). Furthermore, Second Temple Judaism had developed a "martyr theology" based on the idea that obedient death could atone for sins (2 and 4 Maccabees). The author also draws on the Suffering Servant passages of Isaiah (52-53) which depicts a righteous one suffering for the sins of others. In this sense, Jesus' death is presented as an act of obedience which results in the reversal of the curse of the covenant, and he becomes a representative mediator who atones for sins on behalf of humanity, much like the Jewish martyrs of the second century BC.