

Slide 1

The significance of Christ's priesthood

Hebrews 7:11-19

This is the title of the sermon for today, based on these verses from the letter to the Hebrews.

However, as it is Easter Sunday today, I also want to look at the importance of the resurrection with regards to these matters.

We'll do that by looking at several verses from 1 Corinthians 15, so let's go there first.

1 Corinthians 15:12-13

- Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?
- But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.

During our Lord's time here on this earth Judaism was divided in 2 main streams: the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

The Pharisees did belief in the resurrection of the dead.

The Sadducees however did not belief in the resurrection of the dead.

And apparently there were also some persons among the disciples in Corinth that also did not believe in the resurrection of the dead.

So, the apostle Paul starts here by explaining to them what the consequences for them would be if there was indeed no resurrection of the dead.

We'll see that in the verses to follow.

1 Corinthians 15:14-15

- And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching *is* empty and your faith *is* also empty.
- Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up — if in fact the dead do not rise.

These are already some very serious consequences, if Christ would not have risen from the dead.

And Paul continues this argument in the next verses of this letter.

1 Corinthians 15:16-17

- For if *the* dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen.
- And if Christ is not risen, your faith *is* futile; you are still in your sins!

Again Paul stresses the importance of the resurrection and the severe consequences that would follow in case the resurrection would not have taken place.

Without the resurrection of Christ there would be no possibility for us to be saved. We all would be condemned!

But let's continue.

1 Corinthians 15:18-19

- Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.
- If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

In these verses Paul refers to the consequences for those who have died already and the impact on our hope for the future if Christ would not have been risen.

After giving them a clear insight in the consequences of Christ not having risen from the dead he goes on to the actual situation.

1 Corinthians 15:20-21

- But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.
- For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead.

Here his tone changes completely as he starts to explain the great results of the resurrection of Christ and he continues with this in the next verses.

1 Corinthians 15:22-23

- For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.
- But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ's at His coming.

We don't know at what time the disciples of Christ will be resurrected, but we do know that at some point in time it will happen.

In Christ God has already made everything new and the resurrection of Christ is the confirmation of that fact.

Now, let's go to the letter to the Hebrews.

Hebrews 7:11

- Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need *was there* that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron?

When you read through the Old Testament it becomes very clear that the law did not bring perfection to those who received it.

From the very beginning that God set the Jewish people apart as His chosen people, they rebelled against Him and did not follow His commandments.

So, it becomes very clear from the Old Testament, that the Law has no power to change us and sanctify us.

Therefore, something else had to happen.

Hebrews 7:12-13

- For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.
- For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar.

Appointing Christ as high priest really required a change from the law that God had given regarding the priesthood.

After all, our Lord Jesus Christ came not from the tribe that had been assigned to the priesthood under the law.

The writer of this letter points that out another time in the next verse.

Hebrews 7:14

- For *it is* evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.

In Genesis 49:8-12 Jacob/Israel already pointed towards Judah as the tribe from which the rulers/kings of the Jewish people would come. Therefore it was necessary that the Lord Jesus Christ also came from this tribe, just as He indeed did.

But there is another important requirement for the coming of the Messiah. We see that in the next verses.

Hebrews 7:15-16

- And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life.

Look at the last words of these verses!

We all know that the Messiah had to die in order to bring salvation to those who believe in Him.

But at the same time, He should serve as a high priest in the power of an endless life!

How would that have been possible without the resurrection!

The never-ending appointment as high priest is confirmed in the next verses.

Hebrews 7:17

- For He testifies: “You *are* a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.”

Humans only could serve as priests as long as they lived.
Their priesthood always ended at their death.

But Christ was appointed as a priest for eternity.
Therefore He should be alive forever more.

Do we start to understand how important the resurrection also is for
the ongoing priesthood of Christ?

The last verses for today point out how this is the basis for our hope for
the future.

Hebrews 7:18-19

- For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, *there is the* bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

The Lord Jesus Christ came to do what the law could never do:
Reconcile us to God and make us new from the inside out.

In Christ each of us is indeed a new creation with a new heart and a new spirit, as we can also read in Ezekiel 36:26.

And remember: He is interceding for us always with the Father, as we also read in Hebrews 7:25.

Let us pray!