

Hebrews 7

Good morning and thank you for joining us! Would you please turn to Hebrews 7? We're now at the half-way point of this incredible treatise on the Christian faith.

I heard the story of a little girl who came home from Sunday School very excited. She announced, "Mom, God can do anything! He works miracles with His left hand, and heals with His left hand, and holds us close with His left hand." Well, the mother was thrilled that her little girl was so excited about God, but she didn't understand her daughter's fixation with God's left hand. She told her daughter, "Honey, you realize God can also use His right hand."

The little girl shook her head, "No, Mom, He can't! We learned in Sunday School that Jesus is sitting on God's right hand."

Obviously, she was confused, Jesus isn't sitting on God's right hand, but at His right hand. Hebrews teaches us that after Jesus rose from the dead, He ascended into heaven where He sat down with God, signalling the work is complete. And today, Jesus functions as our eternal High Priest.

If you remember, back in chapter 5 the writer of Hebrews introduced the priesthood of Jesus, **Hebrews 5:9 And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, 10 called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek," 11 of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.**

Yet the writer couldn't say everything he wanted to because the Hebrews weren't ready for deeper truths. His readers could handle the milk, but not the meat

The priesthood of Jesus is an important topic we shouldn't overlook. And that's our subject this morning!

We're gonna study chapter 7 and 8, and the title of this morning's message is Jesus as our Priest

Let's pray

If I asked you to name the Top Ten major figures in the OT, most folks would say Moses, or Abraham, or David. I'm sure the name Melchizedek wouldn't make most lists. But the writer of Hebrews surprises us by placing an amazing importance on the life and ministry of this often overlooked person "Melchizedek."

Let's remember where we first encounter Melchizedek. We see in Genesis 14 that Syrian marauders raided the city of Sodom and took Abraham's nephew Lot and his family captive. Uncle Abraham came to the rescue. He chased down the bandits, and returned with Lot and all the possessions.

And it was on the way back from the rescue mission that Abraham met this man, Melchizedek.

Genesis 14:17 And the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley), after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him.

18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. 19 And he blessed him and said:

“Blessed be Abram of God Most High,
Possessor of heaven and earth;
20 And blessed be God Most High,

So with that as the background let's jump in

1 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, **SHOW SLIDE** Melchizedek is mentioned three times in Scripture. Genesis 14 speaks of Melchizedek historically. Psalm 110 sees him prophetically. Hebrews 7 discusses him doctrinally. **CLOSE SLIDE**

We learn some things about Melchizedek from v1. First, we're told Melchizedek was “king of Salem.” “Salem” means “peace.” It's short for the name “Jeru-salem” or “city of peace.”

So notice, Melchizedek was the king of Jerusalem - and the “priest of the Most High God.

The fact that Melchizedek was both king AND priest should immediately tip us off to his unique status in the Scriptures.

In Israel there was a sharp division between church and state. Kings were forbidden to serve as priests. Kings were from the

tribe of Judah, and priests from the tribe of Levi. Any crossover was forbidden.

In 2 Chronicles 26 when King Uzziah tried to play the role of priest God struck him with leprosy. Under the Old Covenant only the Levites were allowed to serve as priests. You could say the priest had to have the right genes - **SHOW PIC** he needed Levi jeans.

CLOSE PIC

The fact that Melchizedek was both a king and priest means he was of a different order of priest - he stood outside the requirements of the OT and Levitical priesthood.

2 to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated “king of righteousness,” and then also king of Salem, meaning “king of peace,” His name means king of righteousness and as we see he’s also king of peace.

3 without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually. No dad? No mom? No descendants? No birthday? No date of death? **SHOW PIC** Mel couldn’t serve in our childrens ministry-he’d never pass a background check! **CLOSE PIC**

There's actually great debate over the real identity of Melchizedek!

When you add up all his descriptions-King of righteousness, Prince of peace, He carries with Him the elements of bread and

wine, no human parentage or genealogy, no beginning or end of life.

I personally believe that Melchizedek can be none other than a pre-incarnate appearance of our Lord Jesus. Long before Jesus was born in Bethlehem He ruled as King/Priest of Salem.

4-5

4 Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. 5 And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham; The eleven Hebrew tribes financially supported the tribe of Levi so they could oversee the priestly duties of the sacrificial system.

6-7

6 but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. 7 Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better. When the tribes of Israel tithed to the tribe of Levi, and the Levites then blessed those same tribes, it was evidence that Levi was of a superior spiritual status.

Likewise, when Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek Abraham was acknowledging that Melchizedek was greater than himself.

And here was the point to the Hebrews believers breaking away from Judaism: Melchizedek was a greater priest than the Levites.

8 Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. V8 is implying that Melchizedek isn't a mere mortal. The historical Melchizedek appears in Genesis 14, that's 2200 BC. But here we're told "he lives" - present tense. He lives today!

9-10

9 Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, 10 for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him. Because the whole tribe of Levi were future descendants of Abraham paid these tithes, we see the Old Testament priesthood paying tithes to the priesthood of Melchizedek. This shows Melchizedek is in a position of authority over both Abraham and his descendant Levi.

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?

David had prophesied that Messiah would be a member of a new priestly order. In **Psalm 110:4** The LORD has sworn
And will not relent,
"You are a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek."

If the Levites and the OT law were being effective and gaining for the nation access to God, why did David think a new priesthood was needed?

12 For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. This is interesting, with a new order of priesthood comes a new set of rules governing those priests and their duties.

See the author is paving the way, he's logically explaining the new covenant is greater than the old covenant
13-14

13 For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar.

14 For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.[fn] Jesus was born into the royal tribe of Judah. The priests only came from the tribe of Levi. Under the OT, Jesus could've never been a priest. That's why God declared that there would be a New Covenant with a new priesthood, the order of Melchizedek.

Remember the items Melchizedek brought... the bread and wine are symbols of the New Covenant.

15-17

15 And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest 16 who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. 17 For He testifies:[fn]

“You are a priest forever

According to the order of Melchizedek.”[fn] In the OT, priestly authority was conveyed by the Mosaic Law to the tribe of Levi. But under the New Covenant, priestly authority is earned.

Jesus lived a sinless life, died an innocent death, rose from the dead, and ascended to God’s right hand. Levites were given the right to be priests. Jesus earned that right by paying the ultimate price!

18-19

18 For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, 19 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 OT law does a great job of setting God’s perfect standard but it doesn’t give us power to keep that standard

20-22

20 And inasmuch as He was not made priest without an oath 21 (for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him:

“The LORD has sworn
And will not relent,
‘You are a priest forever[fn]
According to the order of Melchizedek’ ”),[fn]

22 by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant. God never took an oath regarding the Levitical priesthood. As you study the OT you’ll find that God never

pledged Himself to permanently support their ministry, because God knew they'd eventually be replaced by Jesus.

But in Psalm 110:4 when the priesthood of Jesus was predicted, God swore to support Him eternally! “The LORD has sworn... You are a priest forever...” This is why the hope Jesus brings is so much better!

23-24

23 Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing.

24 But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Here's another weakness of the Levitical priesthood.. Levitical priests kept dying off. The Jewish historian, Josephus, said there were 83 High Priests from the time of Aaron through 70 AD, when the Temple was finally destroyed.

The point is no Levitical High Priest lasted forever. But Jesus is eternal!

25 Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. When I grow apathetic, or get distracted Jesus still stands before God as my righteousness. When I blow it horribly, my advocate, Jesus Christ reminds the court that His blood paid for my forgiveness...

When I ask for strength, or need healing, or plead for mercy, or need patience, or long for love... Jesus intercedes and secures for me a blessing.

Because Jesus occupies eternity and always makes intercession "He is able to save us to the uttermost." Since Jesus is in charge of my salvation it means I'm saved today, and will still be, a million years from now!

Yet often verse 25 gets misread.

Instead of "save us to the uttermost," we read "save us from the uttermost." It's true, Jesus' blood can save the most disgusting, despicable sinner. He can save from the uttermost, but that's not what this verse teaches.

The writer says that Jesus is able to save us "to the uttermost." The emphasis here is not the extent from which He saves, but the extent to which He saves us.

I've heard people say, "Oh, that guy was saved by the skin of his teeth..." or "She'll barely make it to heaven..." But that's never the case!

No one "just barely" makes it. When Jesus saves you - you're saved to the uttermost. You're as saved as saved can get!

All your sin - past, and present, and future - gets blotted out! Jesus' forgiveness is complete, total, permanent. As long as

you're trusting in Christ your standing with God is as sure and steady and reliable as it can possibly be. We can't improve on it!

Yes Jesus saves us from the uttermost, but He also saves us to the uttermost!

26-27

26 For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; 27 who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. The Levites sacrificed herds and herds of lambs. A river of blood literally flowed from the Temple in Jerusalem. But Jesus offered just one sacrifice - Himself. His sacrifice was once for all! His one sacrifice has permanently cleansed us of all our sin!

28 For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever. If you had to choose, who would you rather have represent you before God? A fellow sinful man who has weakness, or the perfect son of God who took our penalty upon Himself?

Now you'd think this would close the case on who is the better priest, but there was another argument.

A priest is only as good as the Temple in which he works. You can be a great ice skater, but if you have no ice... or you can be the best swimmer, but if you've got no pool...

And likewise, for a person to be an effective priest he needs a Temple in which he can ply his trade. And Chapter 8 tackles the subject of Jesus' temple...

Chapter 8

1-2

1 Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, 2 a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man. There is no comparison - Levitical priests ministered in the earthly Temple in Jerusalem, but Jesus ministers in the heavenly Temple, the very throne room of God.

SHOW PIC At the time the Jerusalem Temple had been the center of Jewish life and religion for a thousand years, and these Hebrew believers who read this letter had now been barred from its courts because of their faith in Jesus. **CLOSE PIC**

They desperately needed to know that Jesus and His followers have access to a far greater Temple!

3-4

3 For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One also have something to offer. 4 For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; Though Jesus never offered a sacrifice according to the Law of Moses He did offer a better sacrifice — the sacrifice of Himself.

5 who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, “See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.”[fn] Here the writer quotes Exodus 25:40. On Mount Sinai Moses was shown a “pattern” of the heavenly throne room and all of its furnishings.

6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. Again, with a new priesthood came new and better promises. The Levites served under an inferior system. But Jesus is a priest under the New Covenant. The rules by which He operates, and the promises He’s made, are far superior to that of the OT priests.

7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. If the Old Covenant had worked - and fully reconciled man to God - a New Covenant would’ve never been needed. But God did promise a New Covenant!

And here the writer quotes a lengthy passage from Jeremiah 31 8-9

8 Because finding fault with them, He says: “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— 9 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded

them, says the LORD. The two stone tablets given to Moses were imprinted with God's Law, but the 10 commands couldn't impart God's power to keep His Law.

SHOW PIC The OT Law was like an X-ray. It diagnosed the break, but it did nothing to heal. A better covenant was needed to bring healing. **CLOSE PIC**

Verse 10, still quoting from Jeremiah, tells us,

10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Under the New Covenant, God no longer writes on stone tablets. He now etches His intentions and desires into human hearts.

When a person becomes a Christian they become a new creation. God gives us a new heart! **2 Cor 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.**

SHOW PIC Dr. Christian Barnard was the first surgeon to perform a human heart transplant. Once, he asked a patient if he wanted to see his old heart. Barnard took Philip Bailberg into a room and opened up a cabinet. The doctor took out a glass jar and handed Philip his old heart. For a moment, there was nothing but silence.

SHOW PIC Philip Bailberg was the first man in history to hold his own heart in his hands. He asked Dr. Barnard a few technical

questions about the procedure; then picked up the jar, took a last, long look at his heart, and said to the doctor, "So this is my old heart that caused me so much trouble." He sat it down on the counter, walked away, and never looked back. He left it behind forever. **CLOSE PIC**

And this is what the person who embraces Jesus as Lord needs to do. God has done a heart transplant. Now thank God for your new heart and walk away from the old. And under the NC we're now on intimate terms with God.

11 None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. Under the NC there are no second-hand experiences with God. You know God personally through Jesus!

We don't need a human priest. We have a better Priest, Jesus Christ!

We'll finish the chapter
12-13

12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds[fn] I will remember no more." [fn]

13 In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away. The author of Hebrews is assuring these Jewish Christians that it's no longer necessary to live under the Old Covenant. Judaism, with all its rules and rituals and requirements - it's priests and penalties - are now obsolete.

Through Christ God has struck a New Deal with His people. Here it is... He promises a new heart, a new start, and a new part - all He asks of us is to believe and walk with Him!