



Hebrews 7:1-28 Jesus Transforms Religion

Summary: Jesus establishes a new and better way to God based on the precedent of an ancient priest.

One of the patterns you find in the Bible is that God shows us how things would have worked out if we had tried another way.

So, for example, you might think – why can't I just see God face to face, why can't I hear Him speak plainly, and ask Him any question I want, in a conversation like I would have with another human being? You think, 'if I could do that, everything would be great.' And then you read about Adam and Eve and even Moses and the relationship they had with God and how it still didn't keep them from sin.

Or you think, what if we lived in a country where everyone knew and worshipped God and even our political leaders were appointed by God – that would solve all kinds of problems and everything would be great. And then you read about the kingdom of Israel and how they wandered away from God because they were distracted by the things neighboring countries had or were doing. And you read about divinely appointed kings like David who had amazing moments of compassionate and bold leadership and other moments of tragic and horrendous moral failure.

All throughout human history, as captured in the Scripture, God is showing us: you can try that, but it won't work. He is showing us why we need Jesus, because Jesus is better.

This morning we learn that Jesus is better than the entire religious system that existed before He came. We tried a system full of religious laws and sacrifices and temples, but it wasn't able to save people. God let us see, we tried it, it didn't work, and Jesus is better.

Today, in Chapter 7 we see that Jesus is better than all the ancient Jewish priests. Then, in chapter 8 we see that He is better than the old covenant that established their religious system. In chapter 9 we see that He is better than the sanctuary of the old tabernacle and temple, and then in chapter 10 we see that He is better than every sacrifice ever made because He sacrificed Himself.

Some of you will nerd out on all this. You love the Old Testament and everything to do with it – I want to encourage *you* to remember that the point is not to collect theological trivia or esoteric analogies, the point is to marvel at Jesus. Others of you may be tempted to ask, huh? Who? What? I don't get it – what does this have to do with me? I want to encourage *you* to remember this is the letter *to the Hebrews*. They had different questions about who Jesus was and what God was doing than you do.

But, there is only one Bible - for Hebrews living in the first century and Americans living in the 21st century, for Eritreans, Egyptians, and Estonians, for Germans, Georgians and Jordanians. God has given ONE Bible to all people, all around the world and all throughout time, and it has to speak to all of us.

Personally, I want to argue that's a good thing. Because it means you belong to something (the Christian Church) and Someone (God) that is greater than you or this moment in history. You have an identity, a purpose, and a place of belonging anchored in the work of God throughout the ages.

Now, I know that's a long introduction, but it's important to understand where we're going and what we're about to see as we dig into some ancient and eternal truths involving this mysterious figure Melchizedek. Read with me:

Hebrews 7:1 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, 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," 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.

You can read about all of this in Genesis 14, but you don't get much. Basically, here's what happened – a group of warring kings came to the famous cities of Sodom and Gomorrah where Abraham's nephew Lot lived – this was before the cities were destroyed. The bad guys launched a raid and took Lot and some other people captive. Word got to Abraham who formed a small army, chased them down, attacked them, and recovered all the hostages and the plunder that was taken as well. He then brought all the good guys and all their stuff safely back home.

On the way back, we read

Genesis 14:18 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,
Who has delivered your enemies into your hand."

And he gave him a tithe of all.

That's all you get. But this short interaction is going to be very, very important for several reasons. First, Melchizedek just appears on the scene with no mention of his genealogy, no mention of his past. And that's important in a book like Genesis that is full of genealogies, it's very interested in telling you who this person is and where they came from – but not with Melchizedek, he appears seemingly out of nowhere – never mentioned before, and yet,

He is the [king of righteousness](#) and [peace](#), and he pronounces a blessing *on Abraham* in the name God.

And then, Abraham gives him a tithe, or a tenth, of what he has received as an act of worship to the God who has just given him victory. The whole thing is meant to make you go, 'Huh!?!'

If you're following the story, you thought Abraham was the big deal. Who is this guy that blesses Abraham, and receives Abraham's tithe? He seems to come out of nowhere and be more important than the guy we thought was the star of the show. That's the point!

[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; 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. 8 Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. 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.](#)

Now, I know that's a lot to process, so, here's the argument. Remember Abraham had Isaac. Isaac had Jacob whose name was changed to Israel, and Israel had 12 children who became the twelve tribes of the nation of Israel. One of them was Levi which was designated as the tribe that all priests would come from. And specifically, the High Priest would be descendants of Aaron who was also a member of the tribe of Levi.

So, the point here is: Abraham, the father of the faith, gave a tithe to, and received a blessing from, some other priest *several generations before* the ancestor of your current priests was ever born. What do you do with that?

Well, again, it's all to make the point – the Levitical priesthood was good, it was given by God. He is the one who chose the tribe of Levi *out of all the other tribes* to be priests. But the system wasn't perfect, it had its flaws, which we'll see in a minute, and which is why we needed Jesus who shows up as the priestly [king of righteousness](#) and [peace](#) to bless us and receive our worship.

God actually prophesied this would happen in Psalm 110. *This is after the Levitical priesthood had been established*, God promised to send another, a different type, of priest who would serve [forever, according to the order of Melchizedek](#). And He [swore](#) that it would happen, guaranteeing in the strongest language possible, that this is the way things will go because the flaws of the Levitical system were obvious. Notice:

[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? 12 For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. 13 For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar.

Here's the argument – if the Levitical system worked so well, *why did God promise to send another priest?* And since God did promise to send another priest, that priest obviously does not have to come from the tribe of Levi, just like Melchizedek didn't come from Levi. Melchizedek was the precedent for a God-ordained, non-Levitical priest. And that is important because Jesus was not born into the tribe of Levi, but into the tribe of Judah. Notice the argument:

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

*“You are a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek.”*

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.

Bottom line – the Levitical system of priests and worship wasn't working – we tried that. So, God sent Jesus and swore, *with an oath*, that this was it, this is the only priest and only form of worship that we were ever going to have – all that stuff with priests, and sacrifices, and the tabernacle, and ultimately the Temple, was meant to show us how much we needed Jesus.

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
According to the order of Melchizedek' ”*),

22 by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.

We're going to look into that better covenant next week in Chapter 8. But for now, I want to finish out the chapter with you and then circle back and notice some very important things for us to know about *why* Jesus is better than the old system of priests and sacrifices that He replaces. Read with me and notice what's so great about Jesus:

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. 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. 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.* 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.*

Alright, that's been a lot to process, I know. You're being stretched and challenged spiritually, but that's how you grow. And many of you are growing, God is molding you, shaping you, you're drawing nearer to Him. Spiritual growth is evident in your life. But still, there's a lot to understand in this chapter. So, let's look at five quick things we all want to notice here about Jesus whether we have any connection to this old form of worship and system of priests or not.

First, back in verse 19 I want you to notice the purpose of all this change that God instituted, it was to bring us [a better hope, through which we draw near to God](#).

Now that is really, really, important. Christian, you *know* what billions of people only hope and wonder about. You *know* that you can draw near to God *and* you know how to do it – through Jesus Christ, our better hope.

Anyone ever shop on Amazon? You know the company is owned by Jeff Bezos right? You know he's got a house over in the District? It's 20 minutes from here in the Kalorama neighborhood. Anyone think you can just roll up and talk with him about what's on your mind?

What about Dr Anthony Fauci? Got any questions you want to ask him? Anything you want to share with him, good or bad? You know his office is up at the NIH, just across the street from Walter Reed, it's even closer than Bezos' house. Anyone think you can draw near to him and chat?

There's a lot of tension building up around the world – Russia is massing on its borders, China is provoking its neighbors, North Korea just fired another missile, got any thoughts on what we should do? The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is even closer to us than Bezos or Fauci – any chance you can draw near to General Milley and go over what's on his mind?

What about the Supreme Court Justices, want to share anything with them or ask their thoughts on something? Nancy Pelosi or Mitch McConnell? Can you draw near to them? What about your favorite sports player, actor, YouTuber, Tik-Tokker, scientist, or musician?

These people usually have security guards and security parameters set up all around them. They're not accessible to most of you, unless you're on official business.

Meanwhile, the God of the universe has made a way for you to [draw near](#) to Him through Jesus. And notice – He is initiating, He is making it possible, He is doing it *for you*. And, He is encouraging you to take advantage of the opportunity:

James 4:8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

Jesus comes to give us the [hope](#) through which we [draw near](#) to God. And when you do - Christian you have to know this – *He is not reluctant to see you*. It's not, 'Oh, you again, what do you want?' He's not just being pleasant with you. He genuinely *wants* you to come closer, He wants to be in your life and for you to discover your identity, value, and purpose in Him.

Number Two – notice, according to verse 24, Jesus is your [hope](#) and He's not going anywhere, nor will anyone else ever take His place. He holds continues His appointment to this [unchangeable priesthood forever](#).

Which means, He doesn't change based on your ethnicity or location or age, He is what we need, who we need, wherever we are, whenever it may be - Jesus is your access to the [hope](#) of God in heaven right now here in Northern Virginia, and when you move away to college, or if you get transferred overseas.

The unchanging nature of His [priesthood](#) also means He's the one you really need. Pastors, leaders, parents, and Christian friends are all good to have, but none of them can ever take the place of, or come between, you and Jesus.

Third, and this one is awesome – notice that Jesus has become our High Priest because He is able to save us from the guttermost to the [uttermost](#). Look at verse 25: [Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him](#).

Let me draw your attention to how comprehensive this salvation [to the uttermost](#) is.

It's [comprehensive of time](#) – there is no renewal period or expiration date. All of your sins, past, present, and future, can be forgiven through Christ.

And it is [comprehensive of guilt](#) – this is absolute, total, salvation. There is absolutely nothing that Jesus cannot forgive you of or save you from.

I want you to read your Bible, what does it say? [He is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him](#). Right there you have to decide, is this fiction or non-fiction? Is it true or not?

You have no idea how much I would love to slip into your head and rewire something so that you might really see yourself and the world this way. Jesus is better than you and your sins!

When those memories of the past begin to come back, that's when you say, 'Yes, that's true, I did that, or that happened.' 'But, by God's grace I'm not going back to that, I'm not reliving that. He has forgiven it and it's no longer who I am or what I want to be.' And then you recite some Scripture you've memorized, or pray for a friend, or put on some worship music, you look toward where you're going instead focusing back on where you've been, because Jesus has saved you [to the uttermost](#).

There's also a [comprehensiveness of your inadequacy](#) here – so no matter how far short you come up, Jesus is still reaching out to you, loving you, saving you.

Some of you really want to *do* good, you really want to *be* good, maybe you're a mom who really wants to be patient and kind with the kids, you *want* to be the picture of a loving mom, but sometimes you're just tired, you're worn out, and so, you snap. Or you don't get up and help. Or you don't come through with big, fun, family idea you had. *It's OK*. God knows. He knows how much you want to be, and maybe those desires are good. But He's not condemning you if you don't not come through. He's not condemning you in your struggle – He comes to you, reaching out to you, He is saving you [to the uttermost](#).

And, notice the rest of the verse gives us **number four**: [He is ... able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.](#)

Jesus Christ is for you. Do you know this? His major purpose on earth was to bring God glory by drawing you near to Him, and now, in heaven His work on earth intercedes for you every minute of every hour of every day.

If you've signed up for the next Turn Aside study you're going to learn this truth well, because you're going to spend a lot of time letting truth like this seep down deep into your soul. Look at what we read in Romans 8:

Romans 8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

And

Romans 8:34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

Christian, one of the best things you could do is see yourself the way God does. Yes, you are a wretched sinner. You blow it. On your best days you still have room for improvement, and on your worst days, you're a mess. Your failures and faults are real. But so is the healing

and forgiveness, the spiritual gifts and strength offered to you by God. He is calling you to come to Him, to be shaped by Him, to represent Him and do it well, but He is also rooting for you, helping you, and equipping you as you do it.

And finally, **number five** – look at verse 26-28, I summarize it this way – He is fitting for us because He's better than us.

Jesus is holy. The problem with Levitical priests and present-day pastors, is that even though we're called by God, we're still men. We still have struggles and temptations, we still sin. Church, I love you, I want to serve you well, I want to live well, but I fail, ask my family or ask the staff. I'm sorry. I'm growing just like you. Jesus though, He's **holy**. Absolutely pure.

And **harmless, innocent, blameless**. He reigns with wisdom, justice, and righteousness. He's also **undefiled**. Jesus never had to make a sacrifice for Himself before showing up to help you. Dig as deep as you want, you're never going to find any dirt on Him or disappointment with Him.

And finally, notice this – He is **separate from us, in the presence of God**. The Levitical priests served in the tabernacle and the Temple which were modeled after the sanctuary of God in heaven. Jesus is there, not in the mock-up doing dry runs, but in the very presence of the Father, completing the work of sacrifice and salvation that everything on earth was meant to represent.

My friends, this is Jesus, the One who is better than any priest or pastor that has ever walked the earth. Religious leaders may let you down, Jesus will not. He came to give us hope that **we can draw near to God**, He holds that position permanently, is able to save us to the uttermost, is making intercession for you right now, and is fitting for us because He's better than us.

Our Messiah has come in the order of Melchizedek to bless us and receive from us. We tried other priests, we tried other religious rules, we tried a whole system of sacrifices. It didn't work. Jesus is better. So, let us give thanks to God for what He has done and let us pray.

Let's pray.

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

- Rom 15:13



Sermon Application and Discussion Questions

Hebrews 7:1-28 Jesus Transforms Religion

Summary: Jesus establishes a new and better way to God based on the precedent of an ancient priest.

- How do you usually respond to sections of Scripture that deal with things that seem distant or archaic? Do you nerd out or tune out?
 - What are some reasons why we should make an effort to understand all of Scripture?
 - How has growing in your knowledge and understanding of Scripture helped you better understand or apply another section of Scripture?
- What would it be like to live under a king of righteousness and king of peace?
 - What can you do to reflect the righteousness and peace of God in the areas where you exercise authority?
- Considering the blessing that Melchizedek gave to Abraham, what kind of blessing would you like to receive from God?
- Why do you think Abraham gave a tenth to God as an act of worship? Why do we give today? How is worship expressed through giving?
- Those of us living in modern western culture tend to view ourselves primarily as individuals, we don't give much weight to family origins, but that has not always been true throughout history or around the world. Much is made in this passage of the fact that Levi's ancestor Abraham paid tithes to and was blessed by Melchizedek. What do we lose by focusing more on individuals than families? What do those who focus on families over individuals lose?
 - How has your family affected your knowledge of and worship of God?
 - How are you affecting your family?
- Which of the following is most meaningful to you, and why?
 - You can draw near to God – vs 19
 - Jesus is our priest forever – vs 24
 - You can be saved to the uttermost (comprehensive of time and comprehensive of actions)– vs 25
 - Jesus makes intercession for you – vs 25
 - Jesus is fitting for us because He's better than us – vss 26-28