

Our Better Priest

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[0 : 00] And we've taken a two-week hiatus from the book of Hebrews.! So if you'd open up your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 7, I'm going to read chapter 7 in its entirety.

So 28 verses, let your hearts take courage. For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him.

And to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness. And then he's also king of Salem, that is, king of peace.

He's without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life. But resembling the Son of God, he continues a priest forever. See how great this man was to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth of the spoils.

And those descendants of Levi who received the priestly office have a commandment in the law to take tithes from the people. That is, from their brothers. Though these also are descended from Abraham.

[1 : 33] But this man, who does not have his descent from them, received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. It's beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior.

In the one case, tithes are received by mortal men. But in the other case, by one of whom it is testified that he lives. One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham.

For he was still in the loins of his ancestor Abraham when Melchizedek met him. Now, if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood, for under it the people received the law, what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one name after the order of Aaron?

For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. For the one of whom these things are spoken belong to another tribe from which no one has ever served at the altar.

For it is evident that our Lord, who was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe, Moses said nothing about priests.

[2 : 48] This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become a priest not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life.

For it is witnessed of him, you are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness, for the law made nothing perfect.

But on the other hand, a better hope is introduced through which we draw near to God. And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath. But this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him, the Lord has sworn and will not change his mind.

You are a priest forever. This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant. The former priests were many a number because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but he holds his priesthood permanently because he continues forever.

Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.

[4 : 12] He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.

For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a son who's been made perfect forever.

A priest is a kind of go-between, a mediator between God and man. And the job of a priest is to advocate for sinners before a holy God. Essentially, a priest helps his fellow sinners.

How so? By interceding for them, offering up prayers, offering up sacrifices to cover sins. That's what the Old Testament priesthood did. Under the Old Covenant, under the law of Moses, the Levitical priesthood interceded, offered up sacrifices, but the law and the Levitical priesthood had a major problem.

A huge flaw. Neither could make sinners perfect. Oh, they did a great job of exposing sin, but they couldn't cleanse a conscience.

[5 : 34] We have a major imperfection problem. I mean, you introduced yourself that way this morning.

Maybe you're here this morning with an acute sense of your own imperfections. You know your own sinfulness. You're aware of your weakness. Your ability, your inability to change yourself.

You're starkly aware of regrets, guilt, shame. And you have no way to make yourself perfect in the eyes of a holy God. Or maybe you've come into this building this morning and you've got a vague sense of your imperfection.

And to be honest, you prefer it that way. You don't want to see your imperfections with clarity and detail. Easier vague. Easier to ignore.

You'd rather not become confronted with your failings. You'd rather not have to deal with your guilt, your shame, your regret over the sin in you or the sins that you have committed.

[6 : 43] So whether you're acutely aware of your sins or vaguely aware of your sins, let me ask you. Where do you turn for help? Where do you look to?

When you become aware in some measure of your imperfections, where do you look for help?

Maybe it's your spouse. Who can help you with your imperfection problem? Maybe it's a mentor.

Maybe it's a counselor. Maybe it's a person in a podcast. The original audience that received this letter, the letter of Hebrews, was a Jewish background church and they had been suffering persecution for Christ and they were struggling with sin and their temptation was to go back to Judaism because they knew it.

It was familiar. and this author is saying don't go back that can't do anything for you if you're not have a Jewish background I doubt that you're tempted to go back to Judaism when you're confronted with your imperfections my guess is you'd rather turn somewhere else my guess is you may even self-appoint yourself as your own priest to make you perfect in God's sight you can make yourself better but imperfect people can't make themselves perfect but there is a better priest who can a perfect priest Jesus and what we have in this passage is a better priest by precedent a better priest by promise and a better priest by perfection

Jesus Christ is our perfect priest who alone can make us perfect so let's look at this better by precedent precedent in chapter 7 1 through 10 we are shown the Old Testament precedent of a better priesthood his name is Melchizedek he's not a Levitical priest he's a different order of priest than the Levites than Aaron and it's this order the order of Melchizedek that Jesus the Christ is a priest himself in Genesis 14 Abraham has just rescued his his relative Lot defeated a number of kings he has got a bunch of spoils and on his way back home he is met by this figure named Melchizedek

[9 : 43] Melchizedek the patriarch Abraham then gives him a tithe of everything he's got and then Melchizedek blesses Abraham because he's a priest of the Most High God what the author of Hebrews is doing here is setting a precedent in 7 1 through 3 we have this emphasis on his nature he's got the title of king 7 1 he is the king of Salem he's a Most High God right out of the gate this Melchizedekian priest he is a king and a priest king of Salem priest of the Most High God his name Melchizedek is translated king of righteousness that's getting at his nature his righteous character he's also the king of Salem which is a word that comes from Shalom king of peace he's a peacemaker he's quite a man he goes on to show us that in verse 3 he is without father or mother genealogy there's no record of who this guy is related to nothing on the books he goes on to say having neither beginning of days nor end of life there's no birth certificate and there's no death certificate so what it does is it makes his priesthood open still some have concluded that this Melchizedek is an appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ the second person of the Trinity it's like that fourth person in Daniel 3 in the fire

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego it's like Joshua chapter 5 where Joshua drops at the knees of the commander of the Lord's army pre-incarnate appearances of Christ and it's attractive to think that this Melchizedek is Christ in the Old Testament but in 7.3 we read this but resembling the son of God he continues a priest forever in verse 15 we read this becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek I go back and forth there's something in me that really wants Melchizedek to be a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ but constrained by what these words are saying I think this man is pointing to the son of God he's established a priesthood he has got a unique character a unique background theologians call this a type typology that Melchizedek is a type fulfilled in the person of Jesus Old Testament pointing to something that happens in the coming of Jesus in this sense Melchizedek points to a better priest there's something else that the writer of Hebrews wants to establish and it's in verses 4-10 I'm just going to summarize it for you we read it in verse 7 it's beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior not only is this Melchizedekian priesthood legit it's a different kind of guy he's also a better status he's superior Abraham tithed to him and Melchizedek blessed him it's a picture of superiority he's got a higher status do you do you know why the author of Hebrews is showing us this to establish a precedent right now in our country President Trump is enacting a lot of executive orders and there's some questions about how far can he go what is his legal precedent precedent to do this what is his authority is there something that shows that he can do this that's what the author of Hebrews is showing us there is a legitimate other priesthood established in the law Genesis 14 we've got precedent legal biblical precedent precedent and we know that this is fulfilled by Jesus the ultimate Melchizedekian priest we have here the establishing of precedent a better priesthood by precedent it's not new it's right there in our Bibles but what we also have in our Bibles is not just a precedent but a promise and we see this promise showing up as a quote of Psalm 110 4 in this passage it shows up in verse 17 for it is witnessed of him you are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek that's Psalm 110 4 and then again in verse 21 the Lord has sworn and will not change his mind you are a priest forever those are quoting the same verse out of Psalm 110 and what Psalm 110 is is a promise so we've got precedent Genesis 14 and now we've got a promise in Psalm 110 4 so Melchizedek that name it shows up only twice in your Old Testament Genesis 14 and here in Psalm 110 4 and the writer of Hebrews has already quoted

[15 : 46] Psalm 110 if you turn back to chapter 1 verse 13 remember this the writer is showing us that Jesus the son of God is greater superior to the angels verse 13 and to which of the angels has he ever said sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet that's Psalm 110 1 and what Psalm 110 does is pointing to someone who is coming promised who will be both an exalted king and a forever priest Psalm 110 4 emphasizes the forever priesthood of this one coming if you turn to Psalm 110 it's on page 602 of your pew Bible I just want you to see the first verse there's something going on here you gotta understand there's three people being talked about

Psalm 110 1 a Psalm of David the Lord says to my Lord the Lord all caps that's talking about Yahweh God God the Father the Lord says to my that's David Lord that's David's greater son David's master David's king king and so we have three people God the father who is saying something to David's coming master God the son and what he says to him in 110 1 is sit on my right hand you're exalted you're king and then in verse 4 he says to the same one it's like David is overhearing what God the father is saying to God the son prophetically you are a priest forever and so in Psalm 110 what we have is a promise of the coming of David's greater son the Messiah the Christ who would be both the exalted king at God's right hand and a forever priest it's a promise now just think about when it was written when David penned Psalm 110 there would have been a Levitical priesthood operating there would have been a Levitical priesthood interceding offer up sacrifices and what he's writing is hey there there's someone else coming of a different priesthood and here's why that matters what this promise does is it claims there's going to be a fundamental shift in the law because with the coming of a new priesthood means there must be a change in the law look at verse 12 of chapter 7 for one there is a change in the priesthood and it's coming so says psalm 110 there's necessarily a change in the law as well there needs to be a change we need a new priesthood we need we need a change in the law and we've got to ask the question why is that why is there a need for a change

I mean what's the point I mean that's what he's asking in where does he say it he's like why would we need another priest what further need would there have been for another priest to arise if the

law in the Levitical priesthood could make people perfect there would not be a need for another priest why do we need another priest because they couldn't couldn't make us perfect 11 now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood it's not can't do it look at verses 18 and 19 for on the one hand a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness for the law made nothing perfect check out chapter 10 verse 1 for since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities it can never by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year make perfect those who draw near it's a perfection problem we need a change in the law because this isn't making anybody perfect in God's sight it exposes our sinfulness but it can't make us holy can't make us cleanse our conscience so this promise is being used by the writer of Hebrews to say hey there is a massive change coming and the way that God relates to his people there's going to be a new priesthood and a new covenant Jeremiah 31 Caleb's preaching that next week this is massive there's something else a couple other things I want to point out this promise that's being made here of a new priest priest it's not of priests it's a priest check it out verse 17 for it is witnessed of him

[22 : 26] God the father speaking to God the son you are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek it's not many it's just one 21 but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him the Lord has sworn and will not change his mind you are a priest forever you see the whole priesthood and all its useless imperfection weakness got swapped out by one priest in the order of Melchizedek the other thing I want you to notice is this is an exceptional promise it's a certain kind of promise it's the promise with an oath look at verse 20 through 22 and it was not without an oath for those who were formerly became priests Levitical priesthood were made such without an oath but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him the

Lord has sworn and will not change his mind you were a priest forever this makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant do you see when God wants to promise something and it's like the highest form of his promises if that's possible he will make that promise and he will base it on himself to make the point there's no one greater I can promise by to assure!

you that this change will happen it's going to happen it has happened because this is God's plan for the fullness of time to bring about a forever peace priest who will make imperfect people perfect and so when God swears by himself it should make you remind you of chapter 6 where similar language is used to talk about how God will bless Abraham and he swears by himself Genesis chapter 22 16 with an oath that it's going to happen he's going to bless all people that's what's happening here in chapter 7 with the giving of the son as a forever priest in the order of Melchizedek you see this better priesthood is won by promise God's promise you can't it can't not happen it's unstoppable when you become aware of your own imperfections you need to be looking for help you're looking for help from a better priest by precedent!

a better priest by promise! And can I just say one more thing? Before we go to the finale! God promised you help brother and sister long before you came on the scene he promised this this forever priest when David lived he knows you are imperfect and he's made a way which now brings us to a better priest by perfection and this is what has been ministering to my soul all week long because the guy standing behind the pulpit is acutely aware of his imperfections as a man and as a husband and as a father and as a pastor in verses 11 through 28 we are told a number of things about this forever priest and unlike the

Levitical priesthood who were weak who died who were imperfect Jesus was made perfect 728 for the law appoints men and their weaknesses as high priests but the word of oath that's referenced to Psalm 110 4 which came later than the law appoints a son who has been made perfect forever we don't have an imperfect priest we have a perfect priest you can't even make yourself perfect so what are some of the things that give us this better hope what is true about this better priest I mean he's got precedent!

[27 : 26] He's been promised! He's come on the scene! Let me just point you to five real quick! The first is he's indestructible!

7 15 and 16 this becomes even more evident that this is a new priesthood a better priesthood becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek who has become a priest not on the basis of legal requirements concerning bodily descent are you a descendant of Levi but by the power of an indestructible life what qualifies Jesus to be this forever priest in the order of Melchizedek is his resurrection indestructible I like indestructible a little bit more than resurrection because yeah he's raised from the dead and you can't dead him again it's

indestructible can I just ask you three questions you just answer yes or no can death destroy the risen

Christ no can the devil destroy the risen Christ can your sin destroy the risen Christ no indestructible in fact when you get to the end of the book of revelation Jesus has death and the devil thrown into the lake of fire which is a picture of final destruction final and forever which means that Jesus is the destroyer of these things he's the destroyer of death he's the destroyer of the devil and he's the destroyer of your sin he's justified you he's made you righteous in his sight and so he's destroyed the penalty of sin against you he's going to sanctify you he has!

destroyed the power of sin in you therefore he's able to make you more and more holy you are being sanctified and one day he is going to destroy everything and remake it recreate and he will destroy and remake everything and so in the twinkling of an eye the sound of the trumpet when he comes back we're going to be given resurrected bodies and they are going to be glorious everything stained by sin is destroyed he's indestructible he's all glorious he is your high priest this indestructible one how about having him in your corner how about when you become aware of your weaknesses your mind rushes to the indestructible one boy that helps he's not just indestructible he is holy in 26 and 27 we have this list for it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest holy innocent unstained separated from sinners he was tempted in every way yet he was separate because he was holy though he was a friend of sinners exalted to the heavens we like the Levites are imperfect in our sinning I mean if you just tracked your sinning you'd be like yeah I sin a lot when you take the 33 years that Jesus walked the earth experiencing everything that we've experienced yet without sin it's shocking he never sinned he always obeyed in his thinking in his feeling in his speaking in his doing he did what none of us could ever do he is perfect he is holiness incarnate and one would think that in his holiness he would just hate us in our sin but he doesn't he's tender towards us in our sin he sympathizes with us he is holy and tender and that's glorious he says come to me draw near

[31 : 59] I've got grace for you he's our holy help when we're faced with our imperfections indestructible holy without sin the next thing I want you to see is in verse 27 sacrifice he has no need like those high priests of old to offer sacrifices daily first for his own sins and then for those of the people since he did this once for all when he offered up himself he is a holy sacrifice sinless he had no need to offer sacrifice for himself but he offered himself as a sinless sacrifice for our greatest need and by that sacrifice he perfects the perfect one makes us perfect through his death and resurrection perfect in the sense we're legally made perfect justified sanctified we are being experientially made perfect being sanctified and we will one day totally and fully be perfect in everything when we're glorified let me point you to some sweet passages in

Hebrews Hebrews 9 12 he entered once for all into the holy places not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood thus securing an eternal redemption perfection look at verse 14 in chapter 9 how much more will the blood of Christ who through the eternal spirit offered himself without blemish to God purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God it's a kind of perfection where he makes us perfect in our standing with God cleansing our consciences 10-1 I've already read it what the law was unable to do it can never by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year make perfect those who draw near I am so glad there is chapter 10 verse 14 for it is impossible whoops that's 4 14 for by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified this is what the sacrifice has done for us made perfect for all time we have legal standing with God righteous because Christ bore God's wrath for our sin and Christ's righteousness was imputed to us justified this once for all sacrifice oh it makes him a perfect priest perfect priest indestructible sacrifice and he is interceding right now verse 25 we read this consequently because he is indestructible because of his finished work he is able to save to the uttermost all the way through all the way through those who draw near to God through him those who have a genuine relationship with him since he always lives to make intercession for them he always lives to make intercession for them Romans 8 34 1 John 2 1-2 our forever priest is constantly interceding for us he is constantly advocating he is constantly representing us in the very throne room of God and when we sin he will say something like justified

I sin he's mine paid in full we sin and he's like washed by my blood interceding based upon his once for all sacrifice he's interceding for you when you're sleeping he's interceding for you when you're awake he's not just interceding for you but for me for all of us it's his priestly duty that he delights in

interceding from the throne of grace finally it's permanent this forever priesthood is permanent in 23 and 24 compared to these Levitical priests he's making this comparison all along the former priests were many in number but they were prevented by death from continuing in office but he holds his priesthood permanently because he continues forever do you know what that means he's not bailing he doesn't cycle out he doesn't age out he's our forever high priest interceding once for all sacrificed holy and tender he is indestructible and he'll never leave you nor forsake you never leave you or forsake you no matter how how you feel he will never leave you nor forsake you I want to apply this with what I call the lesson of the squirrel have you ever noticed when you're walking through a park and you see a squirrel what that squirrel does it sees you as a threat and that squirrel does a little skippity hop hip hop to the biggest tree and as you draw close to that squirrel and that squirrel is saying I see you you know what that squirrel does it keeps the tree between you and it you try to go around the tree but it goes around the tree you can't square off on it because that squirrel is keeping that tree in between you and it Christian learn the lesson your oak tree is the forever priesthood of Jesus in the order of Melchizedek when you become aware of your imperfections that are a threat you make like a squirrel to the cross to the indestructible one who's alive and you keep those little imperfections you keep your Jesus in between you and it whether that's during the day or in the middle of the night he is always on duty seeking to guard you protect you perfect you indestructible holy sacrifice interceding permanent you tell me who would you rather have as a priest for your good yourself or him him that's what this passage is about when you become acutely aware of your imperfections where do you turn who do you look to don't go back to a former priesthood of just weak limited men don't turn to yourself like you can make yourself perfect no you turn to a better priest by precedent a better priest by promise a better priest by perfection

[40 : 23] Jesus is our perfect priest who alone makes us perfect he saves us to the uttermost so if you're non-Christian in the room stop trying to perfect yourself rush to Jesus and if you're a Christian in the room stop trying to perfect yourself learn from the squirrel rush to Jesus he's our better hope he's our perfect hope saves to the uttermost let's pray let's pray Lord Jesus thank you so much for not leaving us on our own thank you so much that you haven't just left us to figure it out to do our best to represent ourselves and to make us perfect thank you that not only you gave yourself for us as a once for all sacrifice but you intercede for us even at this moment we give you praise and glory for you are indestructible you are our confidence you are holy and you want us to share in your holiness oh God would you bring us into greater degrees of holiness and God would you help us to when imperfection comes knocking to make like the squirrel and find in you a permanent priesthood thank you so much for

Hebrews chapter 7 in Jesus name amen