

A Perfect Priest like Mel...Who?

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Preacher: Andrew Price

[0 : 00] Our gracious Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your word. Even this particularly, I guess, hard to understand chapter with someone we're not really familiar with.

Father, we pray that you would help us, therefore, to understand what you were telling us this morning. For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Mel Kizadek. It's not a name you often hear, is it? In fact, it's a name that's often hard to pronounce the first time. Is it Mel Kizadek? Is it Mel Kizadek? In fact, my youngest daughter saw me working on this sermon this week, saw the name Mel Kizadek, and she's called him Mel Kizadek.

Probably influenced by the fact that she was hungry for some chisels. And at 1030 Church, we have had five babies born in the last eight weeks or so, six weeks, I think.

And names which include Hayden, Joshua, Everly, Madeline, and Delia. But no Mel Kizadek.

Though there is still one to go, so who knows?

[1 : 10] But who is this Mel guy? And why does he matter anyway? Well, the writer has been trying to explain this to us for a while now, actually.

So if you've got your Bibles there, that would be terrific. Just turn back with me to chapter 5, verse 5. Chapter 5, verse 5 and 6. It's here that the writer uses the name Mel Kizadek for the first time. He says, Now, it's the first time that he introduces Mel here, and he knows that he needs to explain this.

So come with me to chapter 5, verse 10, just at the top of the page there. Chapter 5, verse 10. He repeats it. Jesus was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Mel Kizadek.

Verse 11. Now we have much to say about this. But it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand.

[2 : 22] You see, the writer wants to show his readers who Mel Kizadek is and why he matters. How Jesus can be a high priest for us.

But before he can, he stops to tell his readers, essentially, to wake up. Because they have become lazy listeners. Verse 11. They are not even trying to understand.

And last week, we saw that the way he gives them a wake-up call is by giving them a rather severe warning and a strong encouragement. And so over the page, after he gives this severe warning and strong encouragement, chapter 6, verse 20, the last verse of chapter 6, he picks up the topic of Mel Kizadek again.

Do you see there? Chapter 6, verse 20. Jesus has become a high priest forever in the order of Mel Kizadek.

Chapter 7, verse 1. Now this Mel Kizadek dot, dot, dot. Do you see the logic? He's been trying to explain who Mel Kizadek is and why he matters for some time.

[3 : 28] And now he finally does at chapter 7. He begins to explain who he is and why he matters. And in short, Mel Kizadek was a high priest. And he matters because he shows us how Jesus can be our high priest.

So at point 1 in your outlines and chapter 7, verse 1 in your Bibles, he says, This Mel Kizadek was king of Salem and priest of God most high. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him.

And Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. Here the writer draws our attention to Genesis 14, which was our first reading. And which Dorothy did amazingly well at with all those difficult names. Very well done. The whole point of that chapter in Genesis 14 is, of course, you've got all these kings. Four kings versus five kings. The four kings defeat five kings and their armies.

And yet Abraham comes along with 380 men and wipes them out. Because God is with him. That's what the chapter says. But the chapter also introduces us to Mel Kizadek.

[4 : 39] And the writer points us to this chapter because it's here that Mel Kizadek, we see, was a genuine high priest of God. Even though he was not from Aaron's family.

Even though he was not even an Israelite. You see, we are familiar with the idea that to take on certain roles, you have to be from the right family. So last month, Princess Charlotte was born. I think it was the 2nd of May. And on the next slide, England went pink for the day. They did. Now, we cannot rule in England, can we?

But Charlotte can. Why? Because she comes from the right family, you see. From the royal family. In fact, she is fourth in line for the throne. But the point is, to take on certain roles, we are familiar with the idea that you have to be from a certain or the right family.

And in the Old Testament, to be a king, you had to be from King David's family. And from his tribe of Judah. But to be a priest, you had to be from Aaron's family.

[5 : 43] And his tribe of Levi. And so on the next slide, here you have Abraham. And all of Israel comes from Abraham. He had Isaac, who had Jacob.

And Jacob had 12 sons, you might remember, who became the 12 tribes of Israel. That's Israel's family tree. And then down the bottom, you've got two of those sons.

You've got Judah. And you've got Levi. Aaron came from the tribe of Levi. And all the priests would come from Aaron's family. From Levi's tribe, you see.

Whereas the king would come from the tribe of Judah. And from David's family. And so, Jesus, how is he possibly a priest?

When he does not come from Levi or Aaron's family. He comes from Judah and David's family. So Jesus can be the king, but not the priest. Unless there is another priestly line.

[6 : 49] Unless there is another way he can become priest. And the writer is telling us that Melchizedek is that other way. So chapter 7, verse 1 again.

Melchizedek was a genuine priest of God. God made him a priest. In fact, God had made him both king and priest. And so here we have an Old Testament precedent, if you like.

Where someone was allowed by God to be both king and priest. Without coming from Aaron's family or the tribe of Levi.

We had some chocolates left over the other night after Bible study. And one of my daughters asked if she could have two chocolates. To which I said, no, just one chocolate each. But then she said, well, mum let Tim have two chocolates.

You see, a precedent had been set. And so I said, okay, you can have two chocolates too. And it seems like for our first readers of this letter.

[7 : 50] That Jesus seems like he's taking two chocolates. You know, he seems to be taking king and priest. When he's only allowed to take one. You know, the role of king.

Not priest. Because he's from David's family. Not Aaron's family. But like my daughter who pointed out that Michelle had set a precedent. And let Tim take two chocolates.

The writer is pointing out that God had set a precedent. In the Old Testament, even before Aaron came onto the scene. God had let Melchizedek take on two roles of both king and priest.

Without being from Aaron's family or tribe of Levi. And so God has opened up a way for someone else to be both king and priest, you see. Someone else to be king and priest without having to come from Aaron's family.

Or the tribe of Levi. Now it couldn't be any old person. I couldn't just say, oh, I'd like to be king and priest. It has to be someone who is also like Melchizedek in other ways.

[8 : 52] A person who Melchizedek points to. And that person is, of course, Jesus. The son of God. But you see the rest of verse two and three. He says, first, the name Melchizedek means king of righteousness.

Then also, king of Salem means king of peace. Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, resembling the son of God, he remains a priest forever. Here we are told what Melchizedek's name means. And so on the next slide, the Hebrew word for king is Melch. And the Hebrew word for righteousness is Zedek.

So Melch, Zedek, king, righteousness. And he's also the king of Salem, which in the Hebrew is Shalem. And that's very close to the Hebrew word for peace, Shalom.

So king of Salem, king of peace. But the point is, he's already sounding a lot like Jesus, isn't he? Who is called the prince of peace. Thank you for one person down there.

[9 : 55] Let's try that again. He's called the prince of peace. Yeah. Just making sure you're all with me. He rules with righteousness. Yet the thing that really clinches it is that this king and priest would live forever.

You see, Melchizedek only comes up twice in the Bible. And we never hear about his parents or his children who might take over from him. We don't even hear about his death. And so it's as though he remains a priest forever.

Now, I'm sure he died in reality. But because we never hear about his death, it's as though he lives on forever. And so the person he points to will be a king and priest like him who will also live on forever.

And that person, of course, is verse three, the son of God. Jesus, who did rise from the dead and so does literally live forever.

In other words, Melchizedek is like a picture that points to or foreshadows another king and priest who will also live forever. It's kind of like when I first met Andrew Reid to talk about coming to Holy Trinity.

[11 : 05] Andrew picked me up from the airport, but I had never met him before. So I didn't know which person would be the real Andrew Reid. And then I remembered I had a picture of him on the back of one of his commentaries. Here is the picture on the next slide.

Slightly younger looking Andrew Reid. But the picture pointed to the real Andrew Reid, you see. But because it was a little bit different, the picture, I needed something else to confirm which person would be the real Andrew.

And so Andrew told me on the phone, I'll be wearing a backpack and I'm short-ish. And I found him. I shouldn't stir him when he's not here to defend himself.

But Melchizedek, you see, is like the picture of Andrew. He points us to a person who will be both king and priest. But to confirm which person will be the real king and priest?

Well, he doesn't wear a backpack or he's short. He lives forever. And so when Jesus rises to new life and lives forever, it confirms that Jesus is indeed the one Melchizedek pointed to.

[12 : 10] Jesus is indeed both king and priest. Look at how the writer puts it in verse 15, just the next column. He says, what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears.

One who has become a priest, not on the basis of regulation, you know, law according to his ancestry from the tribe of Levi and Aaron's family and so on. But he's become a priest on the basis of the power of an indestructible life.

He lives forever. For it is declared you are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek. You see, Melchizedek both is the Old Testament precedent and foreshadowing of Jesus.

Here, Melchizedek is the one who opens up a way for Jesus to be our priest and foreshadows Jesus who would become the priest on the basis of his indestructible life.

But, so on the next slide, we end up having these two ways to qualify as a priest. One is through Aaron and his descendants, and the other is by living forever like Melchizedek.

[13 : 23] Of course, Jesus is the only other one who does that. But the next point the writer makes is that the priesthood of Melchizedek is actually greater than the priesthood of Aaron.

Point to verse 4. He says, Now just think how great Melchizedek was. Even the great patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder.

Now the law required the descendants of Levi, who became priests, to collect a tenth from the people, that is, from their fellow Israelites, even though they also were a descendant from Abraham. But this man, Melchizedek, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he still collected a tenth from Abraham, a tithe, and blessed him who had the promises.

And without doubt, the lesser, Abraham, is blessed by the greater, Melchizedek. In the one case, the tenth is collected by people who die, that's like the priest from Aaron's family, but in the other case, it is collected by him who's declared to be living.

One might even say that Levi, who usually collects the tithe, actually paid the tithe through Abraham to Melchizedek.

[14 : 36] Because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi, as it were, was still in the body of his ancestor. And now, these verses can be a little confusing, but the point is clear, is it not, that Melchizedek is greater than Abraham.

That's what it's saying. And who came from Abraham? Well, Levi and Aaron and so on. And so if Melchizedek is greater than Abraham, then he is certainly greater than all those who came from Abraham.

So on the next slide, here it is. And so what the writer is saying is, if Melchizedek is greater than Abraham and Levi and Aaron, then his priestly line, including Jesus, is greater than Abraham and Aaron and the priestly line.

So if you click next, Gwyneth, this is what it's saying. That's what he's trying to point out. And so for the readers to give up on Jesus and go back to the Old Testament priests, which they were tempted to do, would be to go from the greatest priest to the inferior priests.

In fact, it would actually be to go from the only priest to no priest at all, because Jesus, in fact, has replaced the whole Old Testament priesthood.

[15 : 58] Point three, verse 11. It says, It couldn't be the order of Aaron, because when the priesthood is changed, the law must also be changed.

They go together. Here the writer is thinking of Psalm 110, which David read for us at the start of the service. It's actually on the next slide. So we can see it again. And as David Julia pointed out, King David wrote about a future king who would also be a priest, but from a different order, not from Aaron's family.

You see, even King David saw that Aaron's Levitical priesthood, with its law about sacrifices repeated day after day, it could never really perfect people.

That is, the whole sacrificial system, with its priests and sacrifices, could never really make people fully right with God. And so what was needed was a whole new system.

Priesthood and law went together, so we needed a whole new system, a whole new priesthood with a new sacrifice. David realized that. And so he wrote this psalm, predicting it, which spoke about a new priesthood to come, one in the order of Melchizedek.

[17 : 30] And so the writer is saying here in Hebrews 7, that Jesus' very appearance in the order of Melchizedek shows that Aaron's priesthood has now been replaced.

Jesus has appeared in the likeness of Melchizedek, fulfilling Psalm 110 with his indestructible life, and he shows that the old priesthood is now set aside.

The ineffective priesthood is now being replaced. You see verse 13 to 19, he says, And what we have said about the priesthood being replaced by a better priesthood is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, one who has become a priest, not on the basis of regulation as to his ancestry, but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life.

For he's declared, you are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek. And so this appearing of Jesus means that the former regulation, verse 18, is now set aside.

Because, well, it was weak and useless. How? Verse 19, Well, the law made nothing perfect. And so now with Jesus, a better hope is introduced by which we draw near to God.

[19 : 00] You see, the very appearance of Jesus as a priest shows us that the Old Testament sacrificial system with its ineffective priests and sacrifices has now been replaced, set aside.

Psalm 110 has been fulfilled. And so it points us now to a better priest, a better sacrifice in Jesus who can make us fully right with God and so bring a better, a certain hope.

Now, at this point, we might think that the Old Testament system with its priests and sacrifices was not important. I mean, the writer says it was weak and useless, but we need to remember it still had an important function.

After all, God set it up, did he not? But he was only ever meant to be temporary until someone better and more effective came. When I was younger, I broke my arm playing Tarzan.

I had a rope off a tree and I swung out and broke my arm. And the ambulance was called and when they came, the ambulance officers put a splint on my arm and packed it with ice to support it and help it.

[20 : 09] Now, the splint and the ice were important. They had a role to play, but they were not going to fix my arm, were they? They were only ever meant to be a temporary thing until the doctor came who would fix my arm.

Well, so too with the Old Testament priesthood. It was important, but it only ever meant to be temporary until Jesus came. Jesus who could truly fix our relationship with God.

And now that Jesus has come, well, the Old has been set aside and a new way is being introduced, which is effective. And because it is effective, he introduces a better hope, a certain hope of

heaven.

And so all this means then that Jesus is actually the perfect priest, the priest we need, which is our final point, point four and verse 20. It says, and now it was not, Jesus' priesthood was not without an oath.

Others became priests without any oath, but he, Jesus, became a priest with an oath when God said to him, the Lord has sworn an oath, that's the oath, and will not change his mind.

[21 : 21] You are a priest forever. Because of this oath, this quote, Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant.

See, here is Jesus, and he's the perfect priest because his priesthood is secured by God's oath. You know, as we saw last week, swearing an oath was God's way of putting it in writing, guaranteeing it.

And so Jesus will always be around to be our priest. He will always be around to keep the new covenant operating. As we'll see next week, the new covenant, or agreement, comes with great promises, like the promise we read at the start of the service, where God will be our God and we will be his people.

Which means God is our heavenly Father whom we can pray to at any time, in any place. And we are his precious people whom he will never leave nor forsake. But this new covenant with its promises needs a priest to operate it, just like the old covenant did.

And God swears that Jesus will always be around to operate it. Which means we can be certain of enjoying all God's promises. Like God being our God and we being his people.

[22 : 33] We need that assurance, don't we? I mean, we need to know that we can pray to our heavenly Father at any time, in any place, and that he will hear us as our God. We need to know that.

Because life sometimes feels like he's forsaken us, doesn't it? We need to know that he will never leave or forsake us, that he will always work for our good because we are his precious people. We need to know that because sometimes it feels like he's working against us when things go wrong. But Jesus always serves as our priest. He is our guarantee, our lifetime warranty, if you like, that God's promises will always remain true for us, that God will always be our God and we will always be his precious people no matter what things look like.

What's more, Jesus always lives to intercede for us. Do you see verse 23? Now that we've been many of those priests since death prevented them from continuing in office, but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood.

Therefore, he's able to save completely those who come to God through him because he always lives to intercede for them.

[23 : 51] You see, God might have sworn an oath that Jesus will be a priest forever, but it's no good if Jesus does not live forever, is it? But because Jesus does, because of his indestructible life, his priesthood is permanent.

And what's more, it means he's always there, not only to operate the covenant, but also to intercede for us. That is to pray to God on our behalf, to ask God to help us and bring us home to heaven, to save us completely.

And again, we need this, don't we? Life is tough and it doesn't always go smoothly. Sometimes we get caught in sin, whether it's, you know, being angry at someone or refusing to forgive someone or envying someone or not trusting, whatever it is.

Sometimes we get so caught up in life or sin that we don't pray to God the way we should or as often as we should. But Jesus does.

He prays for us. He asks God to help us and to bring us home to heaven. Do you realise that Jesus does that for you?

[25 : 14] Prays to God for you. It's pretty extraordinary, isn't it? Of course, it doesn't mean we can now stop praying ourselves. Oh, Jesus prays for me. I don't have to pray now. Rather, it means we're not alone.

It means we have assurance of heaven because Jesus always lives to pray for us and ask God to bring us home, which God will do.

Jesus, our priest, is praying for us and it assures us we'll be saved completely. You see, Jesus is the perfect priest, the priest we need. For he not only assures us of God's promises and of heaven, he is also the perfect priest who gave the perfect sacrifice for our sin.

Do you see verse 26? Such a high priest truly meets our need, one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens, unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people. No, he sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. For the law appoints high priests, men in all their weakness, but the oath which came after the law appointed the son who has been made perfect forever.

[26 : 35] Jesus was perfect in character and so he didn't have to offer sacrifices for his own sins. Instead, he could offer himself as a sacrifice for our sins, as the perfect sacrifice.

And so, it means he didn't have to offer himself day after day like the Old Testament priests offered animals day after day because his sacrifice of himself at the cross was effective.

It was perfect. It dealt fully with sin and so we can have ongoing forgiveness whenever we ask. And we need that too, don't we? I mean, I still sin.

I do. Just ask my wife. No, don't ask my wife. And I suspect you do too. But with Jesus as our priest, we can have assurance that forgiveness will always flow whenever we ask with sincerity.

You see, it is easy to think that this chapter about some guy called Mel Chiselnick, as my daughter would say, has nothing to do with us. It's just for those first readers who attempted to go back to the Old Testament priests.

[27 : 42] I mean, we don't even think about priests that much these days. But you see, this chapter is for us too because we need a priest. I mean, we are guilty sinners.

We have no right to obtain forgiveness. We have no right to pray for help. We have no right to go to heaven. We have no right to even talk to God. We really do need a priest who can do all that on our behalf.

And chapter 7 shows us that we have one. We have the perfect priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, who stands in God's presence on our behalf.

He has offered the perfect sacrifice for us and as we heard two weeks ago, understands and sympathizes with us. He ensures forgiveness flows to us who ask and praise to God for us who trust, who believe in him.

So I hope you do believe in him because all this is not just for those first readers. It is for us who believe in Jesus for it gives us great assurance and encouragement to keep living for God knowing that we are not alone but we have the perfect priest who sits in heaven and speaks on our behalf.

[28 : 55] In the words of our next and final hymn, Before the throne of God above, I have a strong, a perfect plea, a great high priest whose name is love, who forever lives and pleads for me.

Let's pray. Our gracious heavenly father, we do thank you for the Lord Jesus who is our perfect priest who ensures us of forgiveness who prays for us on our behalf that we might be brought into heaven.

Father, help us to remember who Jesus truly is in all his glory that we might be encouraged to keep serving you for we ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.