

# Hebrews 7 v1

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[ 0 : 00 ] Hebrews chapter 7, the chapter we read, verse 15.

No, we'll start from the beginning, but we'll just finish at verse 3. From the beginning, Hebrews chapter 7, 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. Then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace.

He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days or end of life, but resembling the Son of God, he continues a priest forever.

I reckon this man Melchizedek is, if not the most mysterious character in the Bible, I can't think of anyone else who is more mysterious or more unknown than Melchizedek.

[ 1 : 28 ] The Bible is full of different people, men, women, boys, girls, old, young. And we know some of them, we know lots about them. And others of them, we know very little about them, because not a great deal is told to us.

But we know where they came from, we know where they lived. We know their father and mother, maybe know their children, what tribe they belong to, and so on. But this man is different, because he literally appears out of nowhere and then disappears again.

Now that's a mystery, isn't it? And I don't know about you, but I like mysteries. I like reading about mysteries. And I like watching things about mysteries on the TV.

Things that are hard to explain. Because they get your mind going, don't they? You're asking all these lots of questions. The whole Bible is very mysterious, isn't it?

It brings up so many questions in our minds. That's good. And I hope we do ask questions.

Because that means that we're reading the Bible as we ought to, using the minds that God gave us.

[ 2 : 45 ] Some of these questions we'll never get an answer to. But some of them we will. The most important question, of course, is, what's the Bible all about? The Bible is God's message that tells us how you and I can be right with God.

We can know God. And God can forgive our sins through Jesus Christ and his death on the cross. That's what the Bible is all about. And yet surrounding that message, there are all kinds of different questions.

Some of which the Bible goes into and gives some information. And some of these the Bible goes into very sparsely and doesn't give a great deal of information. And the Bible is all about how God worked in the lives of people long, long time ago.

People that we know about like Abraham and David and Moses. And people like the kings, like Solomon. And yet there are other people who appear to be so mysterious.

We just do not know. For example, this is the biggest mystery in the Bible. Melchizedek.

Melchizedek. Who was he? Who was he?

[ 3 : 53 ] This chapter tells us that he didn't have a father or a mother. He didn't have an ancestry. He didn't have grandparents. He didn't have great-grandparents. And he didn't have beginning or days, not end of life.

He didn't have a beginning and he didn't have life. That's what it says, isn't it? Let me read it again. Verse 3. Read it with me. He is 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. Now who can that possibly be? Who doesn't have a father or doesn't have a mother. Who doesn't have beginning of days or end of life.

Well, we know that some people in the Bible. Well, two people in the Old Testament didn't have an end to their life. That's Enoch and Elijah. They were taken up to heaven. But nobody fits this

pattern.

Melchizedek, we're told that he didn't have father or mother. And he didn't have beginning of days or end of life. Now that is really mysterious. He appears out of nowhere. There are only three places in the Bible where you come across Melchizedek.

[ 4 : 57 ] I want to just make mention of them very, very briefly. Before we try and sort of focus in on what Hebrews tells us about who Melchizedek was. And what God wants us to know about Melchizedek.

You see, the problem is that with a figure like this, with a character like this. You tend to perhaps ask the wrong questions about him.

Instead of asking the right questions. The wrong questions, I think, will discover us are, well, where did he live? And who exactly was he in terms of human history?

These are the wrong questions and there are no answers to them. But the questions that God wants us to know, the answers to, are what purpose did he perform in the Bible?

What can we learn from him? What does God want us to know about Melchizedek as he relates to, and here's the bit, as he relates to Jesus Christ?

[ 6 : 00 ] God doesn't want us to go off on tangents asking the wrong questions. He wants us to focus only on Jesus. Because that's where we find salvation.

That's where we can be reconciled with God. And our sins forgiven. And where we can get eternal life by believing in his name. So I want us to look just very briefly at the three places in the Bible where he is mentioned.

All the way back to Genesis chapter 14. We read it earlier on. And in the days of Abraham, Abraham went to live in Canaan. But Canaan wasn't the kingdom of Canaan.

Canaan was a region in which there were many, many kingdoms, each with their own king. Little kingdoms. Cities surrounded by walls, each with their own king.

And these kings frequently warred with one another. And there was war and there was hostility between the kings of the east and the kings of the west.

[ 7 : 02 ] The kings of the west were like the king of Sodom where Lot lived. Sodom was an incredibly wicked place as we later find out in the story of Abraham.

But that's not the point at the moment. The point is that the kings of the east were, they were the suzerains. In other words, they were the victors. And the kings of the west, they paid taxes to them. Lots of taxes. Year after year after year, the countries of the west would pay taxes to them. And that came, of course, from ordinary people until one day they rebelled against them.

And there was this great war between Kederleomer and the kings of Sodom. You'll find them all named in Genesis chapter 14. The problem was that the place where they chose to have the battle was full of taxes.

Can you imagine a worse place to choose to have a battle than a place that's full of tar pits?

[ 8 : 01 ] And, of course, you know what happened. They got stuck in the tar and they were slaughtered by Kederleomer and his allies. And he came in and he took Lot and his family and loads of other stuff, goods, treasures, possessions, all of which were stored up in Sodom.

And he took them away to his own country. And it appeared for a while as if Kederleomer had won the victory over these kings. Until, of course, a message came to Abraham.

And Abraham got together, his 318 men, and they pursued the kings of the east. And they went all the way up north of Damascus and they caught up with them there.

And they defeated them. Abraham and his 318 men. I reckon that Kederleomer had a lot more men than that. But by the power of God, Abraham was able to defeat these kings.

And to recapture Lot and all the treasures and the possessions that belonged to Sodom. And he was coming back. Now comes the story of Melchizedek. Because out of the blue, as Abraham was making his way back to his own country with all the possessions he had retaken from Kederleomer.

[ 9 : 22 ] Melchizedek. That's all we read. King of Salem brought out bread and wine. And then it tells us that he was the priest of God Most High.

And then it tells us that he blessed Abraham. And he said, blessed be Abraham by God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand.

And Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. And that is the end of the story of Melchizedek. That's all we know about him. Until Psalm 110.

In Psalm 110, which was written hundreds of years later, he comes up again. This time, it's God who is speaking about him. So obviously, this man, mysterious as he was, was an important man in God's eyes.

Well, we can guess that from the story itself. Because he's a man who praises God and who blesses Abraham. And he's a man in whom Abraham recognizes that there is God.

[10:34] He's a man of God, a king. He wasn't like all the other kings. Somehow or other, this man was committed to the Lord. I don't know how that came to be.

But it's obvious from the story that he was. Well, Psalm 110 tells us that there's a conversation. And we know that that conversation is between God the Father and God the Son.

And here's what he says in verse 4. The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind. You, Jesus. You, Christ. Second person of the Godhead.

You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. Melchizedek. No explanation as to what the order of Melchizedek is.

It just comes out of the blue. Now, that's a mystery. And I'm so glad that Hebrews chapter 7 is written and it gives us an explanation, a full explanation as to what God wants us to know about this man.

[11:34] Because if it wasn't for that explanation, then we would only know what's in the Old Testament, which is very little about this man. Now, here in Hebrews chapter 7, here we have an explanation as to what he and who he was.

So, who is he? Well, we know three things about him. Or who was he, I should say. We know three things about this man.

And that's, of course, how you try and solve mysteries, isn't it? You try and get as much information from the book as you possibly can. First of all, he had a particular name.

Melchizedek. I'm not a Hebrew scholar. But I do know this much. That Melchizedek, it means, and remember that names in the Bible, they meant a huge amount.

Much more than names nowadays. Your name described who you were. Melchizedek. So, this name means something very important. It means king of righteousness.

[12:42] Melchizedek is king. Zedek is righteousness. Melchizedek. It means king of righteousness. So, note that down. King of righteousness. That's the first thing we know about him.

And then, he was the king of Salem. That was a place in the Old Testament. Probably is where Jerusalem used to be.

King of Salem. And the word Salem means shalom. You've heard that word before. You know enough about Hebrew to know that the word shalom is what the Jews say to one another even to this day.

It's a hello. If you go into Israel and you want to communicate with the Jews, Jewish people, you say shalom. Instead of hello. And it means peace. Peace be to you. I wish peace be upon your household.

That's what it means. So, he is the king of righteousness. But he's also the king of peace. But then it tells us the third piece of information about him.

[13:49] It tells us that he was the priest of God Most High. In a few moments' time, I'm going to ask, why is a priest so important in the Bible?

And what is a priest? And why is a priest so important for me and you this evening? I'm going to ask that in a few moments' time.

But we're still on the question, who was he? This chapter in Hebrews chapter 7. It tells us that he is without father or mother. Was there ever a person that ever lived in the history of humankind without father or mother?

No, it's impossible. If this was a real human being, he had to have a father and a mother. Was there ever a person who didn't have a beginning of days or an end of life?

Well, we've said before that Elijah and Enoch, God took them rather than them dying.

[14:56] But nobody ever lived in this world apart from Adam himself, who didn't have a beginning of days. Or is this chapter simply describing the way in which this king appears out of nowhere?

It doesn't literally mean that there ever lived a man at the time of Abraham who was... You see, that's why some people actually suggest that Melchizedek was an angel.

Some people suggest that. Some other people suggest that he was another kind of divine being.

Other people suggest that he was none other than Jesus himself in the Old Testament.

Living in the Old Testament. And they say that this description that's given to us here in Hebrews chapter 7 and verse 3. Without father or mother or genealogy. Having neither beginning or days or end of life.

Well, who else could that refer to apart from God himself? But the problem is, of course, that if you read on, he resembles the Son of God.

[16:04] So it can't be Jesus. Because if it was Jesus, it would have said he was Jesus. It doesn't just resemble him. It was Jesus. What I would suggest to you tonight, because I want to move on to what I believe God wants us to know about this man.

I would suggest to you that Melchizedek was a real king. He was the king of Salem. I would suggest to you also that the fact that he appears out of the blue is deliberate.

Because in the pages of the Bible, he only is referred to on one occasion. And that's the occasion that we read about in Genesis 14 where Abraham is coming back from the war.

And that's the purpose that God had for him. I don't doubt for a moment that this man was an exceedingly good and loyal and devout and righteous man.

A man of God. Somehow or other, God had preserved for himself. And all the wickedness and the sinfulness and the idolatry that was taking place at that particular time.

[17:12] God had preserved somehow for himself perhaps a lineage or a family of people. Or he had somehow communicated to this man and changed his life. And so this man, out of all the heathen kings in Canaan, was a man of God.

A person who was devoted to the Lord. God can do anything he wants. And that's what he did, I believe. And his place in the Bible is to point to someone else.

And here's where I want to ask what does it point to. Because the Bible tells us that he was a priest forever. A priest forever. Now the question is this.

What is a priest and why is it so important? And I'm going to ask you right now not to switch off.

Because I know what's going to happen as soon as you begin to think about the technical terms in the Bible.

Particularly things that we don't understand about the Bible. You tend to sort of think about something else. And get distracted and think, I wonder what I'm going to be doing tomorrow. I have to get ready for tomorrow. And I wonder what's in store for me during the week.

[18:19] No, no. Don't. Stay with me. Because this is crucially important. It's as important as this. If you and I don't have a priest tonight, you cannot know God. Now that's important, isn't it?

If we do not have a priest, we cannot have eternal life. If there's no priest, then my sins are not forgiven.

And neither are yours. If we're going to be right with God and if you're going to know God, you absolutely have to have a priest. Not just a priest.

There's only one priest that brings us to God. So it's very important, I think, to ask, well, what is a priest? A lot of people switch off because they think, well, this is too deep.

Well, why shouldn't the Bible be deep? Everything else is. Some of you will go away and study in university one day. You'll get your heads into really complicated subjects. And you love it because it's something that you love and that you know.

[19:24] And that you want to know more about. Why do we not want to know more about the Bible? Why are we so content just to sit back and say, oh, well, it's enough for me that Jesus died for me.

I'm forgiven and that's it. That's not the gospel. That's only a brief summary of the gospel. The gospel is a world of the most marvelous information that God has given us in the Bible.

If you want to grow as a Christian, get your head into the Bible. I'm not saying become an expert.

You can't become an expert overnight. In fact, even the experts will tell you tonight that they're not experts.

They're only scratching the surface of the Bible. But I am deeply concerned that we're content with just the minimum knowledge of the Bible.

You say, well, I'm a Christian. What matters to me is God loves me and I love God. I don't want to know about what a priest is. Hold on. If it's in the Bible, it's because God wants you to know what a priest is.

[20:28] You can't just pick and choose what you happen to like out of the Bible. If you want to grow as a Christian, you absolutely have to spend time getting to know the Bible.

And I'll tell you this. If you really want to be fulfilled as a Christian, then this is the way to do it. To get to know more and more and more of what the Bible has to say to us.

Because it's God speaking to us. And revealing himself to us and telling us, this is why you know. This is how you know that I love you.

This is how my love for you has been revealed to you. In the Old Testament and in the New Testament. Culminating in the coming and in the death and in the resurrection of my son, Jesus Christ.

Christ. And that takes work. The Christian life is work. We were created to work. That's why God said to Adam, go throughout the world and subdue it.

[ 21 : 34 ] And the Christian life is about work. Which includes learning more and more of his word, his Bible. Do you love the Bible tonight?

Do you really love the Bible? Well, let me tell you something. If you love the Bible, then you will want to know more and more. And your life's ambition will be to know more and more and more about God's love for you.

This is the language he chooses and this is the way that he has chosen to love us. Through the priest. So if the priest is, let me put it this way.

If the priest is God's invention, then I want to know what the priest is. I want to know what he did. Who he was. And I want to know who he is as well.

Because in the Old Testament there were priests. And in the New Testament there is one priest. It's actually very simple. There's not that much to it.

[ 22 : 37 ] You read the book of Exodus and sometimes you get bogged down with what the priest wore. He had very elaborate garments. I would suggest to the younger ones that if you want to know what the priest wore.

You want to know how to describe what the priest wore. There's plenty of online illustrations. Which Christians in various places have illustrated.

The tabernacle and the priest. But in any case, the priest was a very, very simple idea. He was someone who stood between a sinful people and a righteous God.

That's it. Let me say it again. A priest was someone who stood between a sinful people and a righteous God.

Now you see how important it is. A wee bit like a lawyer, isn't it? I don't know about you, but I have no interest in law. I like to read about various cases here and there.

[ 23 : 42 ] But it would turn my stomach if somebody said you're going to have to spend the next four years. Some people love it. That's why they choose to study law in university. It has no interest to me whatsoever.

But I'll tell you this. If I was arrested and if I found myself up in court, the number one person I would need to have is a lawyer. It's the same with medicine.

I could say tonight, I haven't the foggiest clue about medical terms and medical concepts and medicines and operations and procedures and all of these things.

Some people, they have a phobia about hospitals. Do you have a phobia about hospitals and doctors? Lots of people do have. But I'll tell you this. If you were in an accident or if you felt unwell or if you had reason to believe that you were ill, that would be the first place you would go to.

You would have to put away your phobia. You would have to get over it and go and see the doctor. It's just too important to have a phobia about. You know, some people have a phobia about the Bible.

[ 24 : 47 ] Lots of people have a phobia about the Bible. As soon as you begin to talk about the Bible, you say, I don't want to talk about this. I really can't stomach it. It makes me so, it makes me just upset. I find the whole thing so distasteful.

That's what people will tell you. Do you know why that is? Because they've never discovered how much they need the Bible and need the gospel and need the Lord Jesus Christ. But if you tonight have begun to take God seriously and you have discovered how guilty you are of your sin.

If you have discovered perhaps after years of trying to live without God that your life is no more fulfilled tonight than it ever was in the past. It's going nowhere.

It's getting more complicated. It's getting more complicated rather than getting more joyful. And you've got this constant voice within your head reminding you that you are accountable to God.

And you will stand before him one day. If I was in that position tonight, you know what I'd be asking? I need a priest. I'm not talking about a priest that belongs to any church or denomination or religion.

[ 26 : 03 ] That's not the kind of priest I'm talking about. It's not the kind of priest the Bible talks about. But in the Old Testament, when God brought his people out from Egypt, took them into the wilderness, the very first thing he did with them was to set up a system where their sin could be forgiven.

And the priest was the person was to set up a system. And the priest was the person responsible for bringing them and for keeping them right with God. And he did that in a very, very specific way. He did that by offering sacrifices. That was the way in which their sin was forgiven and in which they were kept right with God.

He as their God and their people as his people. And there were hundreds of sacrifices. There were morning sacrifices. There were evening sacrifices. There were weekly sacrifices.

There were monthly sacrifices. There were yearly sacrifices. There were great feasts like Passover and the Day of Atonement and so on. And it went on and on and on and on.

[ 27 : 09 ] And the priest was the person responsible. He was the man responsible for that. Now, the first priest was Aaron. He was the high priest.

And when he died, then his son became a high priest after him. And when he died, his son became the high priest. You see, so it went on every generation. There was this endless repetition of priests and sacrifices.

Priests and sacrifices. And anyone who really asked the right questions would know that that system was never, ever going to truly make you right with God.

I know that it's what God ordered. And yet, God had something better in store in time to come.

There were four problems with the way in which things operated in the Old Testament.

And all of these events, they looked forward to the coming of Jesus and how much better his sacrifice and his priesthood would be.

[ 28 : 23 ] First of all, when in the Old Testament there was a priest like Aaron, he was a sinner like everyone else.

He was an ordinary man. Try as he might. He could not live a perfect life. And so the first thing he had to do was he had to offer sacrifice for his own sin.

Before he offered sacrifice for anyone else's sin, he had to offer sacrifice for his own sin. And then there had to be sacrifices all the time.

There was never an end to the shedding of blood. When you close your eyes and you imagine you belong to the tribes of Israel. And there was this great structure in the middle of the tribes of Israel. And at that place, every single day, animals were taken. Lambs and goats and bulls. And they were taken and they were slaughtered at the door. It was like an abattoir.

[ 29 : 23 ] Every single day, people would take their animals. And this was the way in which God reconciled the people to themselves. But it had to go on continuously.

Never an end to it. But when you think about it, the third problem was this. How can an animal take away anyone's sin? There's a question for you.

How can an animal, a lamb or a goat or a bull, how can that death possibly take away your sin?

It actually can't. And the fourth problem was that after a while, the priest died. Then another priest had to be established.

He had to be ordained. And so he would take over. And so it would go on year after year. Century after century. But when Jesus came, there was another order.

[ 30 : 22 ] God opened the door to a different system. When he came, he wasn't an animal. He was one of us.

He was a human being. He stood alongside us. That's why I know that his death takes away my sin. Because he is of the same species as me.

He was a true human being. A man like us. That's what this letter tells us.

That every priest is taken from amongst men in order to represent them. And Jesus represented you and I when he died on the cross. And when he died on the cross, that was it.

That was the once for all, final, ultimate sacrifice. Of the Son of God. Who never needed to make sacrifice for his own sin.

[ 31 : 27 ] Because he was the perfect man. He was God and man. And so he could not be guilty of anything. When he stood before Pilate.

And when Pilate told him, look at how the crowds accuse you. There was no sin in him whatsoever. He was ultimately perfect in the eyes of God.

Nobody could have accused him of any crime or any misdeed whatsoever. But then he rose from the dead.

And he went, we're told, up to heaven. To sit at the right hand of God the Father. Never to die. Always to live. And to be our priest forever. And tonight, the Lord Jesus Christ, like Melchizedek, is a priest who lives forever.

[ 32 : 30 ] Never. Melchizedek. We don't know how long he lived. It's not important. What we're told about Melchizedek is that he pointed us, he pointed the people of Israel towards the priest.

Jesus Christ, who lives forever. Tonight he lives. Two thousand years later. He will never die again. Because he died once.

And the death that he died was to carry your sin and my sin. To pay the price in full. How much is your guilt worth?

Your sin. When you look at your life, you look at all the wrongs that you've done. All the wrongs that you've thought about. The wrongs that you've said. And these are only the ones that you can think of and remember.

How much punishment do you think your sin deserves? Well, I can't even begin to imagine how much punishment my sin deserves.

[ 33 : 36 ] The Bible tells me that Jesus paid all of it. Every last element.

And that's why tonight I can be absolutely sure that my sin is forgiven. because he has promised me that he is my priest.

The one who stands tonight between me and God. And who promises me forgiveness for all time. I hope tonight you're asking the question, well, how can I have this priest? How can I make sure that my sin is forgiven? How can I have this everlasting life?

This new life that God can give me? Jesus said, Ask and you will receive.

[ 34 : 42 ] Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened to you. Have you asked him to be your savior?

Savior. That's the question that we're left with tonight. Have you asked him to be your savior? Well, ask him now.

And you discover what great things that God has done for you and the life that he wants you to have. Let's pray. Amen. Father in heaven, we thank you once again for your word to us and we pray that you'll bless it to us tonight.

We always ask for your blessing. We believe that your voice speaks through some of the mysteries in the Bible and leaves us with questions and answers. We give thanks, Lord, that where there are questions, there is a message from God and an invitation to anyone who is seeking you tonight to come and to listen to the gospel, to listen to the voice of God and to discover what a change you can make in their lives.

Forgive our sin, we pray. Prepare us for the week that lies ahead. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.