

Week 14: FORMED Series

Living under a better priesthood

Hebrews 7

Melchizedek the Priest

7 This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, ²and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, the name Melchizedek means “king of righteousness”; then also, “king of Salem” means “king of peace.” ³Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever.

⁴Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! ⁵Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people—that is, from their fellow Israelites—even though they also are descended from Abraham. ⁶This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. ⁷And without doubt the lesser is blessed by the greater. ⁸In the one case, the tenth is collected by people who die; but in the other case, by him who is declared to be living. ⁹One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham, ¹⁰because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor.

Jesus Like Melchizedek

¹¹If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood—and indeed the law given to the people established that priesthood—why was there still need for another priest to come, one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? ¹²For when the priesthood is changed, the law must be changed also. ¹³He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. ¹⁴For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. ¹⁵And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, ¹⁶one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life. ¹⁷For it is declared:

“You are a priest forever,
in the order of Melchizedek.”

¹⁸The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless ¹⁹(for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.

²⁰And it was not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath, ²¹but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him:

“The Lord has sworn
and will not change his mind:
‘You are a priest forever.’”

²²Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant.

²³Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; ²⁴but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. ²⁵Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

²⁶ Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. ²⁷ 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. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. ²⁸ For the law appoints as high priests men in all their weakness; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

From this week's sermon:

"Melchizedek's role in the argument of the letter is to legitimate a different (and higher) order of priesthood to which Christ belongs, after which he fades from the argument and it becomes all about Jesus again."

From the text we can be encouraged that:

1. God is the initiator of the relationship. God has created a way for us [people] to draw near (Verses 18-19).
2. The relationship and promises are guaranteed. Jesus is the "guarantor," of the covenant promises forever (Verses 22-24).
3. Jesus is able to meet our deepest needs - for forgiveness, holiness, and future deliverance AND He is able to save completely (Verses 25-26).
4. Jesus continues to intercede on our behalf, maintaining the relationship even when we sin (Verses 25-26).

Scholarly Insight:

Cockerill's Comments:¹

Hebrews 7:1-28 is the long-anticipated exposition of Ps 110:4 (Heb 5:5-6, 10; 6:20).¹ This psalm verse is God's declaration of the Son's priesthood. It builds upon his address to his Son, found in Heb 1:5-14, and brings that address to its climax. The pastor's exposition of Ps 110:4 is crucial because it shows how this psalm provides divine/Scriptural substantiation for the superiority of Christ's high priesthood. It also demonstrates how this divine word affirms the eternity of this new priest as the bedrock of his unlimited effectiveness. Furthermore, Ps 110:4 substantiates the pastor's priestly understanding of "sit at my right hand" in Ps 110:1 (Heb 1:4, 13).

Guthrie's comments:²

In 7:11-28 the author argues for the superiority of Jesus as an appointed high priest on several bases. (1) With the appointment of Jesus to high priesthood (Ps. 110:4), the old regulations for worship, centered in the old covenant priests, have been ushered out and a better hope has been brought in (Heb. 7:11-19). (2) That his Melchizedekan priesthood was established by an oath from God shows its superiority, since by virtue of that oath Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant (7:20-22). (3) Jesus' eternal nature means that he, unlike the former, mortal priests, holds his office perpetually and thus offers help forever to those who draw near to God through him (7:23-25). The author of Hebrews summarizes and brings to climax his whole argument on Christ's appointment as high priest in the final three verses (7:26-28).

¹ Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, (Eerdmans, 2012), 293.

² George Guthrie, *Hebrews*, (Zondervan Academic, 2009), 265.

For Discussion:

1. Did the Holy Spirit highlight anything to you as you listened to the sermon (and/or read Hebrews 7? Be encouraged to share one thing that stood out.
2. Because of the original audiences temptation to go back to the old system (Judaism) the author of Hebrews here labours over how much better Jesus is as a priest than the Aaronic/Levite's. That's not typically an issue for us today.... But are there other things that we are tempted to go back to?
3. Verse 19 says, "a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God." What does drawing near to God look like? What sort of things stop us drawing near to him.
4. Brian asserted that the Christian faith is in a person (Jesus) and not in a system. What has been your experience of Christianity as "religion" and "relationship". Have you ever found yourself placing trust/hope in church or religious activity rather than Jesus?
5. The sermon highlighted four truths- through Jesus, God: initiates the relationship, guarantees it, saves us completely, and continually intercedes. Which of these do you find easiest and hardest to believe?
6. [Personal Reflection] Is there anything in your past that you don't believe Jesus can save/deliver you from... anything that you either (1) have not confessed or (2) keep confessing and not receiving forgiveness for.
7. Jesus "always lives to intercede" for us (verse 25). What difference does it make to know that Jesus is continually interceding for believers? How does that encourage you? And does this affect the way you confess/respond after you sin? Consider reading all of Romans 8, or just 8:33-35 if time is short.
8. After reading this chapter, what is one practical step you can take this week to live freely under the priesthood of Jesus? Do you need to intentionally draw near to God, confess sin, trust His forgiveness, or rest in his intercession?

Pray for each other:

Father, thank You that through Jesus we can draw near to You with confidence. Thank You for sending Your Son as our great High Priest, who has saved us completely, guarantees Your promises, and always lives to intercede for us.

Help us this week to trust in Jesus rather than in ourselves, our performance, or any religious system. Where we carry guilt and shame, remind us of Your forgiveness. Where we are tired and weary, strengthen us with Your grace. Where we are tempted to drift away, draw our hearts back to You.

May we live in the freedom of Your better covenant, confident in Your love and secure in the hope we have in Christ. By Your Holy Spirit, help us to walk closely with You. Amen.

Formation Practice:

As we exploring being Formed by Jesus this series; we want to encourage you to do this simple exercise every day for the next 2 months. It can take 5 minutes or more, whatever you are able to achieve (and as you do it more and more, you'll likely find it easier to spend longer listening and reflecting).

"Draw Near Daily" Rhythm (5-10 minutes)

- ***Come:*** *Quiet yourself before God.*
- ***Confess:*** *Be honest about sin/struggle.*
- ***Receive:*** *Remember what Christ has done.*
- ***Respond:*** *Take one step of obedience.*