

Jesus Is the Better Substance - Hebrews 7:1-10 **Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading**

Notes from the Sermon

Who the heck is Melchizedek? That's the question we should be asking after reading our text this week. And not just this one, the author of Hebrews compares Jesus to ole Mel multiple times. The author quotes Psalm 110:4, a reference to Melchizedek in Hebrews 5:6, then tells us that Jesus is a High Priest in the order of this guy in 5:10 an idea echoed again in 6:20. In fact, that is the recurring theme for chapters 5-7, with chapter 7 being a longer explanation of the meaning. Yet, if you came in knowing about this guy you are probably someone who has spent quite a bit of time reading the Bible. So who is this guy and why does the author of Hebrews lean in to this Old Testament character so deeply?

As we have seen over and over again, the author's intent is to argue that Jesus is better than everything, but specifically, He is better than the Jewish religious rituals and system. He does this because these early Christians who are ethnically and were religiously Jews are being persecuted while pushed to leave their faith in Jesus and return to their Judaism. For these people, the superiority of Jesus communicates two key truths. First, Jesus is just better, superior in character, beauty, holiness, goodness, and worth to anything. Therefore to leave Him for Judaism or anything else would be to give up eternal value for temporary fulfillment. But second, for these Jews, Jesus is superior because everything in the Jewish Scriptures and religious system functions as an arrow pointing to Jesus. He is the point of their religion, and every ritual, every observance, every leader, every Old Testament story in some way directs the reader to see Jesus through a different and beautiful lense. In the middle of this book the key argument is that Jesus is the true and better High Priest who has a better ministry and offers a better and final sacrifice for our sins.

The priests were so important in the life of early Judaism. They were the key religious leaders who performed all of the religious rituals for Jews, including the offering of sacrifices for their sin. They were also the Bible scholars and scribes, studying and making copies of the Old Testament Scriptures so they would be passed on to the people. So they taught the common people the Bible and showed them how to apply it to life. But they also functioned as the counselors for Israel, the leaders who stepped into the weaknesses of the people, cared for their needs, and helped them make sense of life. The meaning is not wasted when Hebrews tells these people that Jesus is the better High Priest. Yet, there is immediately two intertwined theological problems. The first is that Jesus is also identified as the Jewish Messianic King, and God's commands forbade a King being a priest and vice versa. Second, Jesus family tree is from the tribe of Judah through David. Priests had to be from the tribe of Levi through Moses's brother Aaron's ancestry. So how could Jesus be our priest.

The answer, Hebrews tells us is right in the Old Testament story about the king/priest Melchizedek who blessed Abraham after his miraculous victory over five pagan kings who attacked Sodom and kidnaped Lot, Abraham's nephew, and his family. Into the story of Genesis 14 steps this cryptic character, Melchizedek, who is King of Salem, but also Priest of the Most High (hear True and Living) God. He gets all of 3 verses and then disappears from the story. Yet, he is the only key worshiper of God in Genesis who does not get a description of his family tree. His name literally means king of righteousness, and he is the King of Salem (later Jerusalem), from the Hebrew word for peace. Already the astute Bible reader will see echoes from the Priest/King who is the King of Righteousness and King of Peace. He blesses Abraham, who we thought to be the most blessed man, but any Hebrew knows, the superior man blesses the inferior, and gives Abraham bread and wine

(you can't make this stuff up). Even in this 3 verse story the sight lines to Jesus are clear, but then, almost 1,000 years later King David, writes a song while contemplating God's promise that the Messianic King will come from his family tree. He knows that as King of Israel he cannot try to take the role of a priest, but he casts a vision for a future King who will one day rule, and this king will also be a priest "in the order of Melchizedek."

The author of Hebrews sees what all the other New Testament authors, by the inspiration of the Spirit saw as well. Melchizedek shows up to point out something beautiful and true that will have its glorious fulfillment in Jesus. By doing so, these inspired authors help us read the Old Testament correctly. We don't want to jump over the texts, they have meaning in themselves. Yet, as preacher Charles Spurgeon is attributed as saying about Bible interpretation for preachers, "Preach the text, but make a beeline to Christ." He said this because every text in Scripture is about Jesus and points us to glorious truths about him.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Psalm 147	Psalm 148	Psalm 149	Psalms 150	Isaiah 1	Isaiah 2	Isaiah 3

Reading from this past week: Hebrews 7:1-10

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Hebrews 5:5-6, Psalm 110

Family Worship

Song - *Joy to the World (Joyful, Joyful)*

<https://youtu.be/pO32Hsn-Lw?si=dnMVRxkibbl-cr8P>

Gospel Project

Unit: God Delivers His People

Story: Moses Parted the Red Sea

Big Picture Question: Why does sin separate us from God?

Answer: Because God is holy, sin has broken our relationship with God.

Scripture: Exodus 13-15

New City Catechism

Question 51: Of what advantage to us is Christ's ascension?

Answer: Christ is now advocating for us in the presence of his Father and also sends us his Spirit.

Verse: Romans 8:34

Hebrews 7:1-10

- Who is Melchizedek? If you are unsure, read Genesis 14 with Hebrews 7.
- How did an ancient story from the earliest pages of the Bible point us to the person and work of Jesus?
- Why is it important for us to read the Old Testament in light of Jesus? What dangers might we run into if we get to Jesus too quickly?
- Why do we need the whole Bible?

Prayer

*In the third week of Advent, light your advent candle and rejoice because of the good news of great joy for all people.

*Pray that you would learn to love the Scriptures and find Jesus on every page.