

JESUS IS BETTER

An In-Depth Study of Hebrews

Course Outline

<u>Week</u>	<u>Passage</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	Hebrews 1:1-4	Introduction to Hebrews, God's Final Word in His Son
2	Hebrews 1:5 – 2:4	Jesus is Greater Than the Angels
3	Hebrews 2:5 – 3:6	Jesus' Sonship is Greater than Moses' Servanthood
4	Hebrews 3:7 – 4:13	Jesus' Rest is Better than Joshua's Rest
5	Hebrews 4:14 – 5:10	Jesus, Our Great Appointed High Priest
6	Hebrews 5:11 – 6:20	Exhortation to Persevere in Light of God's Promises
7	Hebrews 7:1-28	Jesus, The Greater Melchizedekian High Priest
8	Hebrews 8:1-13	Jesus, The Greater High Priest of the New Covenant
9	Hebrews 9:1-28	Jesus' Sacrifice is Greater than the Temple's
10	Hebrews 10:1-39	Persevere In Light of Jesus' Sacrifice
11	Hebrews 11:1-40	The Faith of the Ancients in Action
12	Hebrews 12:1-29	Running the Race with Perseverance
13	Hebrews 13:1-25	Concluding Words

Recap from Session 6

Hebrews 5:11 – 6:20

- Hebrews 5:11 – 6:20 is the pastor's prolonged exhortation to his listeners to persevere in their faith before he goes on to elaborate on the priesthood of the Son. He rebukes them saying that they were still spiritual "babies" needing milk when they ought to be teachers by now.
- He urges them to move beyond the elementary truths of their faith and build upon that foundation. He gives them a stern warning that those who have experienced the blessing of God's salvation but yet fall away cannot be brought back to repentance. They are rejecting the one person that could save them.

- He also encourages them by reminding them of God’s faithfulness to his promises. God swore an oath to his promises, and since God cannot lie, we can trust him to fulfill those promises.

Structure of Hebrews

- **Hebrews 1:1-4 – God has Spoken to Us in a Son Who is also High Priest**
- **Hebrews 1:5 – 4:13 – Jesus’ Greater Sonship**
 - Hebrews 1:5 – 2:4 – Jesus is Greater than the Angels
 - Hebrews 2:5 – 3:6 – Jesus’ Sonship is Greater than Moses’ Servanthood
 - Hebrews 3:7 – 4:13 – Jesus’ Rest is Better than Joshua’s Rest
- ***Transition Passage - Hebrews 4:14-16 – Jesus, the Son of God who is also High Priest***
- **Hebrews 5:1 – 10:39 – Jesus’ Greater Priesthood**
 - Hebrews 5:1 – 6:20 – Exhortation to Persevere in light of Jesus’ Priesthood
 - **Hebrews 7:1-28 – Jesus is the Greater High Priest in the order of Melchizedek (this session)**
 - Hebrews 8:1-13 – Jesus is the Greater High Priest of the New Covenant
 - Hebrews 9:1-28 – Jesus’ Sacrifice is Greater than the Temple’s
 - Hebrews 10:1-39 – Persevere in light of Jesus’ Sacrifice
- **Hebrews 11 – Perseverance by Faith of the Ancients**
- **Hebrews 12:1-3 – Fix our Eyes Upon Jesus**
 - Hebrews 12:4-17 – Endure God’s Discipline as Sons
 - Hebrews 12:18-28 – We Have Come to a Better Mountain
- **Hebrews 13:1-25 – Concluding Exhortations**

Melchizedekian Priesthood

After urging his readers to persevere in their faith and encouraging them about the certainty of God’s promise, the pastor returns to tell his listeners about Jesus becoming a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek. Melchizedek is first mentioned in Hebrews 5:10 without any elaboration. In Hebrews 7, the pastor takes the time to delve deeper into the figure of Melchizedek in the Old Testament. In this chapter, the pastor begins to explain many of the ideas and themes that he introduced earlier on. This priesthood is clearly an important one as the pastor devotes a large part of his sermon exegeting the person of Melchizedek and ties it back to his quotation of Psalm 110:4.

This Melchizedek figure is shrouded in mystery. He appears very briefly in Genesis and was never mentioned again until Psalm 110. For most of us, we would have just skimmed through his account in Genesis and not pay any attention to this person. However, as we shall come to see, his account has much to say about the entire system of priesthood.

Mysterious Melchizedek

Old Testament

Genesis 14

Context

Name – מֶלְכִּי־צֶדֶק

Status of Melchizedek

Psalm 110:4

Context

Who? (cf. Matthew 22:44)

Status

A King-Priest?

1 Samuel 13:5-14 – Samuel rebukes Saul

Hebrews 7:1-28

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, ² and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, the name Melchizedek means “king of righteousness”; then also, “king of Salem” means “king of peace.” ³ Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever.

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

¹¹ If 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? ¹² For when the priesthood is changed, the law must be changed also. ¹³ He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. ¹⁴ For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. ¹⁵ And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, ¹⁶ one 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. ¹⁷ For it is declared:

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

¹⁸ The 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.

²⁰ And it was not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath, ²¹ but 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.’ ” ^c

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

²³ Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; ²⁴ but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. ²⁵ Therefore 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. ¹

The Melchizedekian Priesthood

The Pastor's Exegesis of Genesis 14:18-20

7:1-3 – Retelling of the narrative in Genesis 14

- v1-2a – Recapping the narrative
- v2b-3 – The meaning of his name and his “lack” of genealogy

7:4-10 – The Interpretation of The Narrative in Genesis 14 – Abraham's tithing

Melchizedek's Status – “...the lesser is blessed by the greater.”

A New Priesthood?

7:11-12 – “If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood...”

“...and indeed the law given to the people established the priesthood...”

ESV/NKJV – “...(for under it [the priesthood] the people received the law)...”

CSB/NASB – “...(for on the basis of it [the priesthood] the people received the Law)...”

Discussion: What elements/themes of Old Testament worship are connected to the priesthood?

Based on your answer, what will happen if you change the priesthood?

¹ [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Heb 7:1–28.

The pastor is not referring to the specific part of the law that established and regulated the priesthood. He is speaking about the law as a whole and its dependence upon the priesthood. Before the advent of Christ God's people could not live under the law without the priesthood as a means of approaching God through atonement. Thus the fate of the priesthood and that of the law were inextricably bound one to the other.²

7:13-14 – “...no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar...”

7:15-17 – “...on the basis of the power of an indestructible life...”

7:18-22 – “...Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant.”

Jesus, the Melchizedekian Priest

7:23-25 – “...because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood.”

7:26-28 – “...one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.”

² Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Eerdmans, 2012), 316–17.

A Permanent Priesthood

Even though Melchizedek only appears in a handful of verses in the Old Testament, he plays a significant role in foreshadowing the future work of God through Christ. He is first introduced in Genesis 14:18-20, as the king of Salem and priest of God most high. Given his status as king-priest (and priest of *God most high*), it is surprising that he is not recorded in any of the genealogies in Genesis. Even Abraham, who is considered as the patriarch of the people of God, paid a tithe to this Melchizedek. This further cements how important Melchizedek is. However, there is nothing else said of him in the rest of the Old Testament until Psalm 110. The life and death of any major figure in Genesis is recorded in the genealogies, but not Melchizedek's. Literarily, he had no beginning and end. He seems to go on living forever. Thus, he resembles the Son of God (7:3).

In Psalm 110, the prophesied Messiah is said to be the Davidic king and also a priest in the order of Melchizedek. This is significant because it implies that the current Levitical priesthood was not meant to last forever. With a change in priesthood, it also means that everything associated with Old Testament worship is to change as well, i.e. law, temple, sacrifices etc. (7:12). Thus, God himself announced the obsolescence of the Old Testament practices and ways centuries before the coming of Christ. It is even foreshadowed and alluded in the Melchizedekian account in Genesis 14:18-20. Remember that the listeners were tempted to go back to Old Testament practices. That is why the pastor is trying to show them that if we read the Old Testament aright, we end up with Christ himself.

Taking all of that in mind, the author shows how utterly significant and unique Jesus is as the Melchizedekian high priest. In fact, he became the high priest with an oath from God, reiterating what the pastor said about oaths in the previous chapter (6:13-20). He is the only one who is "holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens" (7:26). Because of this, we know that he is able to save completely those who come to God through him. Followers of Christ can persevere in their faith because of this Melchizedekian priest.

We know from our last session that the pastor urges his listeners to "move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity" (6:1). He begins to do that by talking about the nature of the priesthood of Christ. He will go on to discuss about the nature of the sacrifice of this priest in the heavenly tabernacle in Hebrews 8 – 10.

Homework

Read Hebrews 8:1 – 10:39.

- What are your initial impressions of these chapters (e.g. vibe/tone/content)?
- Try to divide the passage up into sections (5-8 sections) and give each one a title/heading. Look for natural breaks or connective words as the author changes themes/topics
- What are the prominent themes/topics in each of your sections?

Bibliography

Cockerill, Gareth Lee. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. Eerdmans, 2012.