

Hebrews 7-9

INTRODUCTION

We're going to cover **3!** chapters in Hebrews tonight because the writer is making one seamless argument that all flows together. That means we'll have to read larger chunks and be a bit more summary in our examination so that we can get a better feel for the overall argument.

Sometimes we miss the forest for seeing all the trees *individually*.

It's the writers intent here to reveal a theological forest, so we need to step back a bit and take a wider look at what he says here.

As I've said for the last couple weeks, beginning with chapter 5 and running all the way through chapter 10, the author of this letter is making a stupendous case for the superiority of Christ as our Great High Priest.

In chapters 7, 8, & 9, he reveals where Jesus gets his priesthood from, and *why* it's superior to the priesthood of Israel.

CHAPTER 7

We jump right in to the thick of it with this mysterious reference . . .

¹For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, ²to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated "king of righteousness," and then also king of Salem, meaning "king of peace," ³without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.

Since most of vs. 1-3 are a parenthesis, let's cut all of that out and just get the heart of what he's saying here; we're left with . . .

Beginning v. 1, "**For this Melchizedek**" and ending v. 3 "**remains a priest continually.**"

"For this Melchizedek remains a priest continually."

Everything else in vs. 1-3 is descriptive of this mysterious fellow Melchizedek.

The writer first mentioned him in ch. 5 when he originally revealed Jesus Christ as our new Great High Priest.

He said there that he had a lot more to say about his Melchizedek, but that it didn't appear his readers were ready to hear it – that they had grown rather dull of hearing and this all might be a bit too much for them.

Then, in the last verse of chapter 6, he again mentioned him and said that Jesus' priesthood was *superior* to the priesthood of the Tribe of Levi because it was based on the *higher* priesthood of this guy Melchizedek.

Now he sets out to prove how Melchizedek's priesthood was superior.

He says here he was the king of Salem and priest of the Most High God.

We first learn about Melchizedek in Genesis 14 were we read these words . . .

18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. 19 And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; 20 And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And [Abram] gave him a tithe of all.

As the story goes, someone came to Abram one day and told him his nephew Lot had been kidnapped by a raiding party.

Abram rounded up his servants and went after the raiders and defeated them.

The spoils of the rescue was pretty substantial and as he returned to his home he had to pass by the city of Salem, the ancient name for the *City of Jerusalem*.

As he passed by, the King of Salem, Melchizedek, came out to greet him.

Besides being the King of Salem (which means Peace), he is also given the title of priest of the Most High God.

And take careful note of the *emblems* of greeting he brought out -

bread and wine, the emblems of the New Covenant!
So Melchizedek is the King of Peace, Priest of God, and he serves
Abram communion.

And what does he do? He blesses Abram!

Without any argument, the lesser is blessed by the greater!
And Abram immediately acknowledges Melchizedek's superiority
by giving him a tenth of the spoils of the battle.
This was the allotment due to God, and Abram paid it to
Melchizedek!

The name "Melchizedek" means "king of righteousness."

The interesting thing in the account in Genesis is, this is all we see or
hear of him.

No genealogy is given for him; we don't know who his parents
were.

And since there's no other mention of him, we don't know when
he rose to reign in Salem or when his rule ended.

The writer is concerned here with emphasizing the fact that Abram,
who the Jews recognized as the friend of God and the spiritual and
physical father of their race and religion, paid the deepest kind of
respect and honor to this Melchizedek.

And Melchizedek's priesthood, because it's origin and conclusion
remain a mystery, still stands because it's never been declared
superceded by God.

Until there is some kind of evidence of the *fate* of Melchizedek,
his priesthood still stands!

Who was Melchizedek?

Most scholars are convinced this is what is called a *theophany* –
and appearance of God in human form.

Specifically, this is a *Christophany* – an appearance of Christ in
the OT.

In fact, this whole account is given in Genesis as a way to lay the
groundwork for the later coming of Christ and His taking the
role of Great High Priest in an order that surpasses the
priesthood of Israel.

It may be this very event, Abram's meeting the King of Salem, that
Jesus referred to in John 8 when he said to the religious leaders
who were standing against Him . .

56Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad.”

57Then the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?”

58Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.”

And of course, they took up stones to kill him, but He escaped once again.

4Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. **5**And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham; **6**but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. **7**Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better. **8**Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he *receives them*, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. **9**Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, **10**for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

The argument is simple and straightforward.

In the Law of Moses, the people were commanded to offer tithes to God and give them to the priests.

The priests were the descendants of the tribe of Levi.

But Levi was the *great-grandson* of Abraham, and Abraham paid a tithe to Melchizedek!

So, in a way, Levi and all his descendants paid a tithe to Melchizedek *through* Abraham and by so doing, they acknowledged there was a priesthood that was superior to their own.

11Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law),

what further need *was there* that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? ¹²For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. ¹³For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar.

¹⁴For *it is* evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. ¹⁵And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest ¹⁶who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. ¹⁷For He testifies:

“You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.”

Okay, this gets a bit steeper – but don’t lose sight of the overall point. The writer is simply saying that the priesthood of the tribe of Levi was only meant to be *temporary* until the Messiah would come and officiate from a *higher* order of priesthood; one that was eternal and was revealed in Genesis 14 through Melchizedek. Where he gets the idea the Levitical priesthood was *temporary* comes from Psalm 110:4 which he quotes in v. 17.

Psalm 110 is clearly Messianic – it points to the coming Messiah. And in it King David says that the Messiah will not only be the King of the Earth, He will be a priest in the same order that Melchizedek served.

A change in priesthood means a change in the law – for the priesthood is *ordered* by the law; it was the Law of Moses which established the Priesthood of the tribe of Levi and made the Family of Aaron the family of high priests.

If the Messiah is a priest of a *higher* priesthood, that means the entrance of a *higher* law.

¹⁸For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and

unprofitableness, ¹⁹for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, *there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.*

The Law of Moses while in itself perfect, was powerless to affect real change in the people.

All the law of Moses could do was *reveal* sin by specifying what to do and what not to do, and then to provide a temporary covering for the guilt of the sins committed by the people.

But the law had no power to enable people to KEEP it.

If anything, all it did was make the people aware of their sin and their powerlessness.

And that was precisely God's intent.

God gave the Law of Moses so that people would realize they were sinners.

He gave the priesthood and the rituals of sacrifice as a pattern or example of what was needed to forgive sin – a substitutionary sacrifice on their behalf.

All of this was meant to drive the people to the Messiah who would come and first provide the final substitutionary sacrifice that wouldn't simple *cover*, but would *remove* their guilt, and then second - rise from the dead with new life so they could find power to overcome sin in their personal lives.

²⁰And inasmuch as *He was not made priest* without an oath ²¹(for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him:

“The LORD has sworn And will not relent, ‘You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek’”),

²²by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.

Again, to understand this we need to drop the parenthesis –

V. 20 - And inasmuch as *He was not made priest* without an oath -

V. 22 - by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.

When a priest of Israel began his service, it was simply because as a man of the tribe of Levi who had reached the proper age, that was his job.

But King David, in writing Psalm 110, spoke prophetically and declared the Word of God that the Lord *swore*, He took an *oath* that the Messiah would serve as high priest from the order of Melchizedek.

So Jesus of Nazareth, though he is from the tribe of Judah, serves from an order of priests that is higher than the tribe of Levi.

A higher priesthood means a higher covenant and law.

23 Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. **24** But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. **25** Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Jesus' priesthood is also higher because He lives forever!

The priests of Israel had a life span of only 60 or 70 years.

And since the priests represented the people before God, the quality of the worship that was offered to God was directly proportional to the godliness of the priest.

That meant in some seasons, when a really good man served, the worship of God was holy and right.

But at other seasons when mere office holders and career men held the priesthood, worship was stale and lifeless.

Jesus is perfect in righteousness and holiness and there is no one more fervent or zealous for God with perfect knowledge.

So His priesthood is superior to every one that came before Him.

And of course, because He lives eternally, no priest comes after Him.

As it says in v. 25, the work that Jesus does as priest doesn't merely cover over the guilt of our sin –

He saves us in that He not only removes our guilt, He removes the sin itself.

And then, He sits at the right hand of the Father and makes constant intercession for us.

Imagine how difficult it had to be for the people of ancient Israel.

If you lived in the region of Galilee, your sense of communion with God had to be an extremely difficult proposition.

The reason why is because, according to the law, the only place you could offer a sacrifice was where? In Jerusalem at the temple.

But the trip to Jerusalem was a long and difficult one.

Most folks only made the trip once a year.

When you sinned, you needed to offer a sacrifice.

If you wanted to make a special dedication of yourself to God, you had to offer a sacrifice.

If you wanted to really worship the Lord, you had to bring an offering.

And that meant going to Jerusalem, standing in line at the temple – meeting with a priest, expressing your heart to, and then going back home.

So, this issue of intercession on the part of the priest, which was a necessary part of your worship of God and your sense of intimacy with the Lord was infrequent and a huge hassle!

But now, Jesus Christ, our great High Priest as entered into the presence of God, not with the blood of bulls and goats which can only cover sin.

He's entered with His own blood which removes sin and He abides there to make unceasing intercession for us.

This is what makes our ability to be in constant fellowship with God possible.

26For such a High Priest was fitting for us, *who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens;* **27**who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. **28**For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, *appoints the Son who has been perfected forever.*

Every day in the temple, the priests would offer up the sacrifices of the people.

But before they could offer up the offerings of others, they had to

offer one for themselves because as mere men, they too were sinners.

Every day, all day, the smoke of the sacrifices went up.

Every day, all day, the priests officiated at the altar.

Why? Because the offerings that were made did not actually discharge guilt or enable holiness.

Jesus single sacrifice of Himself did what the millions of offerings and sacrifices of the past could never do – remove sin and enable for holiness.

HEBREWS 8

¹Now *this is* the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, ²a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.

³For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore *it is* necessary that this One also have something to offer. ⁴For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; ⁵who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, “*See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.*” ⁶But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

The temple in Jerusalem was built by Solomon from plans developed by his father David.

David in turn got his plans from the book of Exodus in which we read that Moses received the pattern and blueprints for the *tabernacle* in the wilderness.

Moses was told to make sure that the tabernacle be built exactly according to the vision and plans he'd been given by God.

The reason why was because it was actually a *replica* of

something in heaven; more than likely the throne room of heaven.

By carefully executing the plans for the tabernacle and later the temple, the people were supposed to be confronted with the holiness of God and the need for someone to stand between a holy God and sinful man – a Mediator who could bridge the gap between them.

Just as the priests of Israel served in the replica on earth – Jesus entered in to the real thing in heaven and performed His perfect service.

His service, because it was perfect and lacked nothing, only needed to be offered once.

Then He sat down at the right hand of the Father, as testimony to the fact that His work is finished.

7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.

Now the writer moves to show that it was ALWAYS God's intention to surpass the Law of Moses and Covenant with Israel.

He does this by quoting the prophet Jeremiah . . .

8 Because finding fault with them, He says: "*Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—*⁹***not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD.*** ¹⁰***For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*** ¹¹***None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.*** ¹²***For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.*"**

13In that He says, “*A new covenant,*” He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

This is a quote from Jeremiah 31:31-34 and was spoken by the prophet nearly 1000 years after God gave Moses the Law.

The Jewish people ought to have realized that a New covenant and priesthood was coming – it was clearly spelled out in this passage.

All that the old covenant and too weak to perform, the New covenant would accomplish.

In v. 13, the writer says that since the New Covenant has come in, the Old Covenant is no longer needed and will be swept away.

There is a short transition time while the gospel is preached to the last of the Jews, but then, once it is, the last vestiges of the Old System will be removed.

Isn't it interesting that not long after this letter was written, the temple was destroyed and the priesthood of the tribe of Levi was submerged.

Though Judaism continues as a religion today, the ritual and formula are gone.

Since there is no temple, there is no altar.

And since there is no altar, there are no sacrifices!

And since there are no sacrifices, the heart and soul of Judaism are absent.

HEBREWS 9

In this chapter, which we'll cover only very briefly, the writer describes the service the priests used to offer in the tabernacle and temple . . .

1Then indeed, even the first *covenant* had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary. **2**For a tabernacle was prepared: the first *part*, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; **3**and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All,

⁴which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; ⁵and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

⁶Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing *the services*. ⁷But into the second part the high priest *went* alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and *for* the people's sins *committed* in ignorance; ⁸the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. ⁹It *was* symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—¹⁰*concerned* only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.

He is just repeating what he's said before.

The old sacrifices only *covered* sin, they didn't remove them.

¹¹But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. ¹²Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, ¹⁴how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? ¹⁵And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the

redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

This is a great picture he paints here.

He says in effect that all those sacrifices and offerings that were made under the old covenant were like IOU's that people made to God.

Each sacrifice was another IOU placed on the holy spindle.

When Christ came, He gathered up all the IOU's and nailed them to the cross.

When He shouted, "It is finished – Paid in full" every one of those IOU's was paid in full.

That declaration – received by faith, sets us free from sin and clears our conscience of the sense of guilt.

The last phrase of v. 15 introduces a new idea . . .

. . . those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

Think about the mindset of the ancient Jew as they walked away from the temple after just having handed over their sacrifice to a priest.

Their sense of communion with God was renewed, re-established – based on what?

The death of the sacrifice!

The death of the substitute meant a renewal of life!

The author draws on that idea here and says that those who believe in Christ, enjoy an inheritance.

His death secures for them and inheritance of life.

16For where there *is* a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. **17**For a testament *is* in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives. **18**Therefore not even the first *covenant* was dedicated without blood. **19**For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, **20**saying, "*This is the blood of the covenant which God*

has commanded you.”²¹ Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. ²² And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

The word “covenant” carries the idea of “a last will and testament.”

[1]

If a man writes his will, that will is not in force until he *dies*. It was necessary for Jesus Christ to die so that the *terms* of the New Covenant might be enforced.

Even the *Old Covenant* was established on the basis of blood as the writer says in vs. 19-21, which is lifted from Exodus 24:3-8.

In Lev. 17:11 we find God laying down this principle when we read,

The life of the flesh *is* in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it *is* the blood *that* makes atonement for the soul.

Since God has ordained that forgiveness of sins is through the *shedding* of blood, it’s necessary that blood be shed and applied if the New Covenant is to be in force.

Moses cleansed and prepared the earthly tabernacle for service by sprinkling the blood of a bull.

Jesus has entered into heaven with His own blood.

²³Therefore *it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these*, [meaning the blood of bulls] **but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. [meaning the blood of Christ]**

We can understand why the earthly tabernacle and temple had to be purified and dedicated by the application of blood.

Without the shedding of blood there is no remission or forgiveness of sins.

And since the earthly temple was built by mere human hands, it was subject to being defiled.

The sprinkling of blood cleansed the temple of it’s defilement, at least temporarily.

But heaven is undefiled, holy!

Sin is not allowed to enter there.

So why would Christ need to apply His blood to the heavenly things?

The reason why is because the sprinkled blood changed God's relationship to the heavenly things.

God could enter into communion with people because of the blood of Christ.

Here's the crux of what the author is saying:

Through Jesus Christ, we who are sinners can enter into the holy of holies in the *heavenly* sanctuary.

Physically, we're on earth; but spiritually, we're communing with God in the heavenlies.

All of this will get a fuller treatment in ch. 10, which we'll get in to next week.

24For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, *which* are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; **25**not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another—**26**He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. **27**And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, **28**so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

Now we can summarize the writer's point in this entire portion of Hebrews we've looked at tonight.

The New Covenant was established by blood, just as the Old Covenant was.

The difference is that the New Covenant was established on the basis of a far better sacrifice and applied in a better place!

CONCLUSION

Vs. 27 & 28 will be my text for Sunday. We'll dig into them deeper

then.

But for now, notice the point made in vs. 24-26.

While the high priests of Israel had to renew the sacrifice every year – Jesus offered Himself once!

And that one offering is good for all time!

Let me try to say this delicately, yet clearly – In the Roman church, when the priest holds the elements of the Lord's table and pronounces his blessing over them, Roman Catholic doctrine teaches that the bread & wine literally become the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

This is called the doctrine of *transubstantiation*; in which the *substance* of bread dough and fermented grape juice *transmutes* into the body and blood of Christ.

Thus when people eat the Mass, they are actually *taking* Christ unto and into themselves.

This is understood as how one receives grace, and so stands in right relationship with God.

According to Roman doctrine, only a Roman priest has the power to transmute the elements into the body and blood of Christ.

And once the elements are transmuted, they are then elevated and carried around in a re-enactment of Jesus being lifted up on the cross.

During the Mass, Jesus' crucifixion is carried out all over again.

And it is this act, so says Rome, that gives the Mass its power to affect salvation.

But this flies in the face of the clear teaching of Hebrews 9:25 where we read . . .

25not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another—²⁶He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. ²⁷And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, ²⁸so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.

Christ's death, because it was perfect in its aim and purpose has secured our eternal salvation.

We have no need today of priests to intervene on our behalf
because we have a Great High Priest who even now sits at the
right hand of God and makes intercession for us.
We don't need priests, saints or anyone else – We have Jesus!

[\[1\]](#) Wiersbe, Warren