



Christ Changed Everything-Part 1

Why Don't We Have Priests?

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I know you're in shock. A little anticipatory chart shock. I know some of you looked at the preaching portion for the afternoon and you're thinking he's out of his mind. We know how long it takes to preach through two verses. He's going to try to tackle 28. Nate, what's wrong with Pastor Mike? He couldn't do that in a month.

We're going to cover a lot of ground today. And for the few of you that come up to me after the chart days and say, boy, I like those charts, today is your day.

Why are we covering so much ground so fast? You saw the list there. He changed everything, got a nice color ad for the next six weeks. And you're going, what's going on? Chapter 7, chapter 8, chapter 9, chapter 10, half of chapter 10. Here's why. Let me give you a little heads up as to why we're doing this.

You remember Hebrews chapter 1, which I asked in the back, how long ago was it that I was preaching Hebrews 1? And I think it was over a year ago, but we were in Hebrews chapter 1. We had a section that was just, I mean, it's a significant section of the first part of Hebrews on why Jesus Christ is better than angelic beings. Do you remember that? We did a little sermon, I think we called it Angels 101. And the subtitle was why it's a big deal that Christ is better than angels. And we had to spend a lot of time trying to get in the sandals of the first century Jewish person and recognize, well, that's a significant issue.

But we confess to the fact that nobody here is tempted to think that Jesus Christ is inferior to an angel. Especially because our view of angels is hallmark and fat, chubby, naked little boys with wings. Jesus isn't inferior to an angel. So we were able to deal with many verses quickly.

Today we reach Hebrews chapter 7. Next week, Hebrews chapter 8. The week following, the second half of 8, chapter 9. We're going to cruise through this midsection of Hebrews, not because it's unimportant, but because the writer of Hebrews is trying to convince a first century Jewish group not to be tempted to go back to the ceremonies, the priesthood, the sacrificial system of the Old Testament.

The problem is I'm preaching to 21st century Gentiles who don't struggle with any of those issues. No one grew up in this room hoping to be a Levitical priest. Am I right? Fireman maybe, you know, I don't know, but not a Levitical priest. No one is struggling in their conscience coming to church saying, well, we're not bringing an animal to deliver to the guy at the door. I don't know, can this really be church? Nobody's thinking about that.

Nobody struggles with the absence of the sacrificial system. Nobody struggles with the fact that you're wearing clothes that have two kinds of materials that are sewn into the clothes and you don't go, oh, I feel really bad. How can I do that with a clear conscience? When, of course, as a Sabbath school Jewish graduate, you would know that's against the Levitical law. You're not supposed to do that.

You and I are over all of this. So it is no longer an issue of conscience or a difficulty of application, but it still remains for us an academic question, a question of our intellect. And so we need to spend



some time here, but we don't need to spend the kind of time that we spent in chapter 6, for instance, which I think took us 8 to 10 weeks to get through.

We can do an entire chapter in one day because today's topic is, why in the world don't we have Levitical priests anymore? And you're not wondering that, are you? But it is a good question. I mean, the question really begins to beg other questions that relate to the issue of God and his immutability. Is God really the same yesterday, today, and forever? Well, then why in the world does he require one thing at one time and now all of a sudden he requires something else now?

Because the critics of your Christianity will say, see, God's changing all the time. He's evolving. Which, of course, a lot of the guys will say, well, we're not even sure there is a God. But people's perception of God is changing. And so that's why the Bible was different on the left side than it is on the right side. And you and I should say, that's baloney.

But why is it? Why is it that God cared about the hair on the side of your head if it were 2,050 years ago, but he doesn't care about it now? What's the deal? Is his style changing? That's what we're trying to deal with in the next six sermons that we'll be preaching. I was going to say in the afternoon, but most of them will be in the morning. So that'll be good. I know. Just—I'm excited about that.

It's a good question. It's one you should be asking. I'm sure all of us have asked it at one time or another.

Well, there was so much to deal with in crushing 28 verses into one sermon that I couldn't do it with one worksheet. So I have two this week. And I want you to start with the supplement page, if you'd pull that out. Let's start with the supplement page.

As we try to address this question, which really does have implications for how we view God and how we view our Bible. Let's get to chapter 10. We'll slow the pace down again and look at all the issues of applicability for us. But for now, let us get a few preliminaries under our belt before we jump into Hebrews chapter 7.

And the first thing I want you to remember is that there is a issue in the book of Hebrews of emphasizing Jesus the Christ. And that's what the book of Hebrews is all about. And just by way of review, because we've dealt with this, you should have a graphic that looks something like this. Three guys and somebody's dumping something on the head of all three of them. What's that all about? Fill in this box.

And I know most of you can do it from memory because you've heard us teach on this in the early part of Hebrews, but just for the sake of review, let us understand that there were three important offices in the Old Testament. Old Testament theology founded on three very important God-ordained offices, and all of them were authorized by a very strange, from our perspective, a very strange authorizing ceremony.

And what it involved was this: the act of pouring oil on one's head. Taking olive oil and pouring it on the top of one's head. But the olive oil wasn't just any olive oil. It was mixed with all kinds of spices. It smelled really good. It was special.



As a matter of fact, God said, if you use this ingredient for anything but sanctifying and consecrating these leaders, you will be killed. So this was a very important recipe. One you don't want to experiment with on your own.

But that important recipe of oil poured on the head of three groups. But before we get to that, let's understand one more time what this was all about.

The word in English that translates the pouring on one's head or the pouring out of some liquid, in this case, a special blend of olive oil, is the English word *anointed*. If someone has poured oil on your head in a ceremony with the special ingredients that the Scripture requires, you would be someone who has been anointed.

Now, I know that's not how most of you use the word, because we've kind of created our own 21st century way to use the word, and that's another sermon. But for now, probably best if we didn't use it in an unbiblical way, let's at least think in a biblical way about the word: to pour oil in a special ceremony on one's head.

The only equivalent in the New Testament, by the way—a little parenthetical moment—is the laying on of hands. We still do that. That was the New Testament thing. If we're going to authorize a pastor, what do we do? We put our hands on that pastor. We authorize him in a service. This was what was involved in the Old Testament with the pouring on of oil on one's head.

If you had that oil poured on your head, you were anointed. In Hebrew, we had a word for that. If you were one who had been anointed, and that is the word *Mashiach*. In English, we transliterate it, *Messiah*. That's the Hebrew word.

And therefore, we think Jesus was the only Messiah, but we're wrong because anyone who's been through this service is a Messiah in a small m. And some of you Bible students read your Old Testaments carefully, and you stumble over that when you find it in the Old Testament. Wait a minute, this guy's called the Messiah? I thought there was only one Messiah.

Is there only one Messiah in the Bible? Interactive church? No. Several. You weren't ready to say that, but it's true. How many Messiahs are there in the Bible with a capital M? One. Oh, see, that was a Sunday school answer. That was good.

Now, in Greek, *Mashiach*, the Hebrew word, we don't translate it as *Messiah* anymore. There was a Greek word for it. Of course, the New Testament was written in Greek, and that word is *Christos*. We translate that *Christ*. So we talk about the *Christ*.

Now, because in the New Testament, we don't have this ceremony of pouring oil on the head to authorize someone for an office because they're not New Testament offices anymore. We don't have this word used of anyone but Jesus from Nazareth. He was called the *Christ*.

Now, hold that thought. That's review for most of you, right? Was it new for a couple of you? You can nod your head at me, smile. Good. The review was worth it.

Okay, there were three groups, three offices, I said. Let's look at letter A. Position, function, tribe, and then let's just at least be able to prove in Scripture that this was an anointed office. Okay, and by that I mean they had oil poured on their head in a sacred ceremony.

A. King

Position number one, guy on the left, the king. The king of Israel, which was God's allowance and eventually his choice with David, was an office that God set up for the function of—jot it down—leading God's people.

These were supposed to be people who knew God's word. As a matter of fact, the Bible required that every king of Israel was to make a handwritten copy of the Old Testament law. Now there's a first assignment for you, right? First day of your kingdom. Okay, sit down. You got about a two-month project. Go write the Bible by hand. That's what they had to do.

They were supposed to know God's word. They were supposed to know the truth. And they were in a very real sense a political shepherd of God's people, and they were to lead God's people with the policies and the rules and the ordinances and the laws that reflected God's pattern. And so they were leading on behalf of God.

The tribe for this, Sunday school grads, Judah. There are 12 tribes of Israel, right? Zebulun, Naphtali, Manasseh, all these people. And then you had Judah, the most Southern area of Israel. And from that tribe, God made that the regal tribe. If you read the last part of the book of Genesis, you'll find that God ordained that tribe. The scepter would be in Judah and it would not depart from Judah.

Remember: anointed king of Israel, who's often called, or occasionally called in the Old Testament, the anointed one, is one who is from the tribe of Judah, who has had the sacred oil poured on his head for the purpose of leading God's people as the president or CEO or the leader of the country.

Where were they anointed? Several places. You can just jot this one down: 1 Kings 139 is one example, just to show you, of the ancient ceremony of pouring the oil on the top of the head of a king.

B. Priest

Letter B. There was another group. We'll represent him with the icon of the middle guy there. He is the priest. The priest.

This was the person with various different ranks. There was the high priest, the ultimate priest, who had the function, the assigned function, and let's just summarize it with this phrase: to speak to God for people.

He was to go and speak to God on behalf of people. That's why he went into the tent of meeting, they often called it, to meet with God and plead for his mercy because he knew the people of Israel, just like us, are sinful people. But he went and interceded on behalf of the people and said, God, I want you to accept these people and forgive these people. And after all these ceremonies, the priests would go in and speak to God on the behalf of people. Okay?



What tribe did you have to be from to serve in this role? Levi. Oh, see, we know that one. That's why we call them the Levitical priests. They're all from the tribe of Levi, one of the 12 tribes of Israel.

Anointed, absolutely. From the very beginning, it was the first instruction to anoint anybody was to anoint the priests in Exodus chapter 30, verse 30. And you can read about the special ingredients in that if you want to keep reading verses 31 and 32 and I think into 33. Exodus 30:30.

C. Prophet

Letter C. There was a third position that was very important, a sacred position in Israel. It was the third leg of this stool, if you will, on which the functioning people of God operated. And that was the position of the prophet. The prophet.

Now, the prophet was someone who didn't speak to God for people. His main role was inverted. He was to speak to people for God. He was to speak to people on behalf of God.

God would give him the message and he would deliver the message. Usually to the people of Israel, but sometimes not. Jonah's been given a message that he didn't want to give to the people of Nineveh. They weren't Israelites, but God says, go and tell them this. And the prophet was to go on behalf of God and speak by proxy, if you will, for God. And he shows up and says, here's what God says. That's what the prophet did.

So you have the king, he leads on behalf of God. You have the priests, they speak to God on behalf of people. And you have the prophet. He speaks to people on behalf of God.

And with that triad of leaders in Israel, we had a functioning society where God was getting along quite well, doing what he needed to do, and taking his people from where they were to where he wanted them to go. He was leading his people through those three offices.

What tribe did you have to be from to be a prophet? Manasseh, right? No. Any tribe. You could be from any tribe. As a matter of fact, he chose some interesting people. You could be a donkey if you wanted to. He'd sometimes use a donkey to speak for him literally and metaphorically.

Anointed, yes. They would even anoint the prophets. 1 Kings chapter 19 verse 16 is a good example, and I picked that one because in that very verse you have God's instruction not only to anoint and pour oil on the head of the king but also on the prophet who would succeed the former prophet. So he was the spokesman for God.

Great. Now unfold that sheet if you haven't already—that's some background.

Well, actually, before we do that, let's look at Hebrews chapter 1. The point of Hebrews is establishing the fact that God has done an amazing thing. He's taken the role of king and priest and prophet, and he's put them all together in the ultimate one that is called in Hebrews and introduced to us in Hebrews as not the prophet, the priest, or the king, but as the Son. He has a special relationship to God.

As a matter of fact, in the first chapter, he is called God, Elohim himself, or Theos in Greek, and he's called God, and yet he serves in all three functions.



Look for them here as we just reread this section, verse number one:

In the past, God spoke to our forefathers through the—and if that was blank, you could fill it in just on our little preview of the book of Hebrews. That's, of course, the prophets. God speaks to people, the Israelites, through the prophets, at many times and in various ways.

But in these last days, here's the role of prophet: he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things. Now, if you're heir of all things, see, that's a position of your status. That's starting to look like a king. We'll unfold that later. And through whom he made the universe. That's a pretty powerful situation there.

The Son, verse 3, is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being. Now, see, that's the issue of leadership. When a king led, he led not for himself. He led for God. Here's one who has all the attributes of God. He's the exact glory, radiance of God's glory, and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his own powerful word.

Now, priestly function: after he had provided purifications for sins, who does that? The priests do that. He sat down at the right hand—uh-oh, that looks like what a king would do—of the majesty in heaven. And so he became much more superior to angels than the name that he's inherited is superior to theirs.

For to which of the angels did he ever say, you are my Son, today I've become your Father. Or again, I will be his Father and he will be my Son. And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, let the angels worship him.

In speaking of the angels, he says, he makes his angels winds and his servants flames of fire. But about the Son, he says, your throne, that's what kings sit on, oh God, that would be the ultimate authority in the universe, now embodied in a person, will last forever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter, that's what kings hold, of your kingdom. That's what kings lead over.

You have loved righteousness, you've hated wickedness, therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions, now underline this phrase, by anointing you with the oil of joy. He's yet to call him Christ. Have you noticed that? That's what the Christ is.

And what's interesting is all three offices are merged together in Jesus Christ. The king, the priest, the prophet. And it's all laid out in the first nine verses of the book.

Now, we start to go through the book, and we're kind of cool with the issue that he's the prophet. Look at what he did. He revealed his Father. Look also how he led as the great king. We're calling him Lord. So when we see the word Christos starting to show up in the book of Hebrews, we're like, okay, I'm cool with that.

But before we get very far, chapter 5, we start hearing about him being a priest. And that starts to cause a few people to scratch their heads. We've got to deal with that. How in the world is Jesus the priest? That's what Hebrews chapter 7 is all about. And that's why the person of Melchizedek is brought up.



And that's the next thing I'd like to do: compare the three Melchizedek passages. Compare the three Melchizedek passages. And there are only three. So I put a chart together for you. This is just the indicators on the left and the first column. And let's just work our way from top to bottom in dealing with this.

We'll put a reference down, we'll turn to it. And what's interesting about this chart is what we're doing in this chart is giving you every reference in the Bible to Melchizedek. There's only three sections of Scripture that do it. The first one, as a matter of fact, if you do an Old Testament search, you'll only find his name come up twice. In two passages, only one reference of his name.

The first one, Genesis chapter 14. And once you jot that down, let's turn there together. Genesis chapter 14.

Now, Melchizedek, interesting name, only shows up in one section of the Old Testament story in Genesis. His name only mentioned one time.

Do you know the story here, the little context? You've got Abraham with a flunky nephew named Lot who gets in a lot of trouble. He's greedy. He's selfish. He's causing Abraham some grief, but Abraham loves him. He's a faithful uncle, and he deals with Lot as best he can. And when he gets himself in trouble, like going to live in Las Vegas because he really likes the bright lights, and then Las Vegas gets taken by Phoenix—see, Abraham has to leave his digs in Aliso Viejo and go deal with his brother who got taken away as the armies came in and took all the loot from the slot machines and the blackjack tables in Vegas.

Sodom is what we're talking about. That was the wicked city. He wanted to live there. He wanted to be a part of that. The fast lane, all that. And the kings, the foreign kings come, and it's not Phoenix, but they come and they take over. And they pull all these people away, including Lot. Now he's a captive.

Now, Abraham puts together an army. And with just a few men, as we often see, a providential miracle, a GT2, if you're in that sermon, Abraham goes out with a few men that are trained for war. And he's able to go, as the kings are leaving, able to get them, defeat them, kill a bunch of them, and get Lot and his family back and all his possessions.

So Abraham wins this very unexpected victory in Genesis chapter 14. And I think that's the way your translations probably put a heading to that chapter.

But drop down, if you would, to verse number 18. Genesis 14, verse 18. After coming back, he's returning from the defeat of the kings. He says:

Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine. It's interesting. And he was a priest of God Most High. And he blessed Abram. This is before he had his name changed by God. Saying, blessed be Abram by God Most High, creator of heaven and earth. Well, that's the one we got introduced to in Genesis 1. Okay. And blessed be God Most High who delivered your enemies into your hand.

Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

He meets this religious leader and he gives him 10% of his income.



Who is this guy? A couple things you need to know. Jot down the date. This is approximately 2000 BC. And you Sunday school grads should understand that the exodus and the giving of the law, when Moses came out from Yul Brynner and took the children of Israel into the desert to worship God, that was 1445 BC. So this is, you know, 500 years before that, you have Abraham meeting the priest of the Most High. That's very important, as we'll note in the interesting features.

But at least jot this down: what do we got here? What's going on here? Let's just put down the nature of it for the sake of comparison. This is a historical passage. This, in every way that we look at the genre of Scripture, the narrative here, this is a real guy who's a real priest who comes out and really takes the tenth from Abraham. This is a historical situation in 2000 BC. Okay?

Interesting features. A couple things. Let's step back and just look at his name.

Which, by the way, in Hebrews chapter 7, if you want to look on the back of this sheet real quick, let's look at verse 1. You're going, what is that spaghetti mess? We'll figure that all out. But look at verse 1:

This Melchizedek was king of Salem, priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings, and he blessed him. And Abraham gave him a tenth of everything.

Now, here's what he's interested in saying, first of all, about Melchizedek:

First, his name means king of righteousness. Then also, king of Salem means king of peace.

Now, straighten that out in your mind. Melchizedek, he says, means king of righteousness. And if you've ever taken any Hebrew or you grew up in the synagogue, one of the first vocabulary words you learn is melech. Melech is the Hebrew word for king. Tzedek, tzedek is the Hebrew word for righteousness. His name, Melchizedek, means king of righteousness.

Furthermore, he's designated in Scripture as the king of Salem, which is a real historical city. We don't know much about it, but it is interesting that he's the king of Salem. Because in the ancient Near Eastern language, that Salem, and even you know this, some of you from visiting Israel or reading Israel, it's a cognate word of the word shalom, it means peace. Salem is the Hebrew word for peace.

So you have him being one who is designated king of righteousness, king of peace. That's interesting. His name is interesting because it has so many biblical ties, as we'll see in a minute.

Secondly, what's an interesting feature about this discussion is his kingdom. He is said to be the king of Salem. Well, what's Salem? Well, everybody, as they research this, though some will dispute it, you're in the ancient Near Eastern area of a place that would eventually be called Jerusalem. Jerusalem. Does that sound familiar? Yeah, that's familiar. It's in the news every day. Jerusalem.

Jerusalem, ancient Ugaritic root is probably—and though they dispute this—Yeru comes from the word the foundation of or the establishment of. Salem, peace. Jerusalem means the establishment or foundation of peace.



What's interesting is that place has been that place all throughout the days of Abraham, all throughout the days of the conquest of Joshua, and the wanderings of Moses until David finally, after it should have been done long ago, he captures the city and he ends up calling it the city of David.

What's interesting about this occurrence of Melchizedek, king of righteousness, king of peace, is that he is the king of a place that is known later in Scripture as the most important city in all of the Bible. Jerusalem.

The bizarre thing is, before Jerusalem is ever an issue in Scripture, the first time we meet this bizarre guy, Melchizedek, he's the king of the future home of Jesus' trial and crucifixion and resurrection. Interesting.

Next thing that's important to note is his role. He's introduced to us as the king of Salem. And he's also introduced to us as a priest of the Most High God. And if there's any confusion about that, if you're thinking it's Dagon or some bizarre Canaanite god, no, no, no—creator of heaven and earth, that's clearly the God of the Bible.

Why is that bizarre? Because the law wasn't given. We don't have any instruction about priests in the Bible until 1445 BC. 550 years later we have—550 years before the account of the giving of the priesthood—we have a guy that we meet who is a priest of the Most High God. That's bizarre. It's what we call anachronistic. It doesn't seem to make sense. It's out of time. How do we have a real priest of God before God even instructed people to have priests. That's the mystery of Melchizedek.

And it's interesting that years before God ever gave the political priesthood, we've got this guy.

Not only that, it's a dual role, which by the way, as we'll see later, kings and priests don't mix in terms of their roles. If you're either a king from Judah or you're a priest from Levi, you're not a king and a priest. We don't have those kind of tied into one role.

His status, which he makes a good deal of in Hebrews chapter 7. His status is an interesting feature because he is giving Abraham, the leader of all of Israel, the father of Israel—he's giving 10% of his spoils from war to a man that is not even in the line of Abraham. He's not the chosen people. What's going on here?

See, the children of Israel started with Abraham. He's giving his worship and he's giving his tithes in this case, his offerings to some foreign person. What was he from? What kind of background did he have? What country did he migrate from? Who is he? Where did he get the instructions for the priesthood?

Do you see how this is a mysterious dude in the Scripture? Who is this guy? And how is it that this anachronistic appearance of the priesthood 500 years before there is a priesthood, as far as we know. Obviously, he's a priest of the Most High, and he comes from Jerusalem.

Reference number one. Tucked away in Scripture, beginning of the Bible, 2000 BC. Great.

Now we have another reference. An unexpected reference that pops up in the Bible in Psalm 110, which has already been quoted a number of times in the book of Hebrews. This is an important psalm.



So let's write it down and then let's turn there. Psalm 110. And if you get there, you might want to also jot down the date. You got your pen in your hand still.

This is a Psalm of who? David. Did you get there and see that? If not, you'll see that. It's a Psalm of David.

David lived in the United Kingdom of Israel in the Old Testament around the turn of the millennia. So let's just jot that down in the second box. This is about 1,000 B.C., which is, again, I'm not a numerologist, but it is interesting, 2,000 B.C. and then 1,000 years later, in biblical history, God goes, oh, yeah, that Melchizedek guy? Let me remind you about him.

And here's where it shows up in David's psalm. Let's read the first few verses together. Psalm 110, verse 1, a psalm of David.

Yahweh—you have capital O-R-D there? Yeah, that means Yahweh. That's God's proper name—says to my—is that Yahweh? Is that capital? No, Adonai. That's the generic word for God, the Lord, right?

Order of Melchizedek, that ought to be enough to drop anybody off their horse in the 10th century BC. What in the world are you talking about?

You know, in three of the four gospels, it is recorded that Jesus uses this passage to speak of himself. As a matter of fact, he spends time talking about, isn't it odd that David says that Yahweh, creator of heaven and earth, says to my Adonai that he's going to be this king.

And he asked the question in Mark 12. He says, how is it then that people say Messiah, who would they, you know, got a picture of in the Old Testament, who would come and fulfill the law? How do they say that Messiah is son of David? If David is saying, Yahweh says to my Adonai, doesn't sound like a son if he's calling him Adonai, that is Sergeant, Sir, Boss, King.

How is it that David's calling the Messiah his king and not his son? Jesus asked that question, makes all the scribes scratch their head.

Now that's odd enough in the text. So we're obviously talking about something beyond the human here. And now all of a sudden, he says, oh yeah, verse 4, Yahweh has sworn and will not change his mind. You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.

And if you go, well, I'm sure there's some explanation somewhere in Leviticus about this. Remember I said only two times in the Old Testament you'll only find two references to his name. Genesis 14, Psalm 110, verse 4.

Now we had another thousand years expire and people are going, what is that? Was that all about?

Interesting. Let's keep moving on. This is clearly, because of what we pointed out already, a prophetic type. This is a type. This is something that would be true of Messiah. It is true of Messiah, as Jesus pointed out, that he would not be inferior to David. David would be calling him Adonai, the Lord. And Yahweh says to Adonai, hmm, yeah, going to make the enemies a footstool for your feet. But sit at my right hand until I do that.

But then there's this weird thing about Melchizedek.

A couple things to note. First of all, the surprise of this reference comes completely out of left field. No other reference in Psalms, no other reference in the early monarchy, no other reference in the law of Moses. There is nothing about this. There is no expectation of this. You just don't find it. No extra-biblical writings, nothing outside of it. No inscriptions. Nothing. Out of thin air comes a reminder of a thousand-year-old incident of Abraham with this guy named Melchizedek.

This mysterious priest that shows up that Abraham shows deference to and gives 10 of his stuff. Surprising.

Now there's also a problem here. There's a problem for several reasons. One is that kings aren't priests and priests aren't kings. And to say that there will be a king who sits on a throne and is called Adonai, great king, great leader, great boss, and then he said to be a priest forever—someone should throw a flag on the play and say, that's not right because kings aren't priests. That's one problem.

Secondly, if you want to talk about priests, we've got priests. They're the Levites. The Levitical priesthood, the Aaronic priesthood was firmly in place. What are you going talking about a priest? And then a priest that's of some other order, an order of Melchizedek. There is no order of Melchizedek. We don't even know what that guy was about. We just read about it a thousand years ago. Order of Melchizedek. If you want to talk about the Levitical priesthood, great. But the order of Melchizedek, that's a problem.

If you took this text at face value and expected a king to rule that David gives deference to, who is both a priest and a king, it would be one of the most revolutionary passages in all of the Old Testament. And yet here it was a song that they sang in Old Testament worship, one of the sacred and inspired songs of the Bible. And by the way, if a human attempted to claim that he was a king and a priest, he would be killed, he would be stoned.

Thirdly, let's at least note this interesting feature: the speculation. All I can say is that people were scratching their heads about this. We have, after this reference, some extra-biblical writings of people going, hmm, what was that all about?

If you're into the Dead Sea Scrolls, which I know some of you have read those or do read them, Cave 11, Scroll 13, just for your reference, for those of you that have a copy of that at home, is a reference of speculation about the Qumran Society, about what this Melchizedekian priesthood thing was all about. No one knew. Sometimes they wrote about it.

And you know, if you were with us during the Da Vinci Code thing, you know someone's going to write on it from the Gnostics, right? Which is post, you know, life of Christ. But sure enough, they had their own bizarre writing that showed up in the Nag Hammadi documents, which is really bizarre. But that's about a six-page document.

The Dead Sea Scrolls, which is very fragmentary still, even if you fill it all in as best we can, is about a page and a half. And trying to wonder, what is this guy all about? All it led to was speculation. People didn't know. How's God going to resolve this bizarre passage that we accept as inspired?



Which, by the way, shows integrity of Scripture, because that would be the kind of thing you'd want to erase. Right? I'm going to, it doesn't fit. When your kid asks you in Sabbath school or on the way home from synagogue and says, Dad, what's that all about? I don't know, son. See, that would be one you want to scratch out. And yet they kept it, revered it. It's inspired. It's an inspired psalm. I don't know what it means. We don't know what it means. Some weird guys out in the desert writing stuff about it, but no one knows.

Clearly, though, the other thing that you have to note is it's clearly a Messianic psalm. A Messianic psalm, if you want to write the reference down, there's several in the Gospels, but at least jot down Mark chapter 12, starting in verse 35. Jesus begins to discuss the fact that this relates to him. The son of David is also David's Lord.

There's a third reference. It shows up here in Hebrews chapter 5, again in Hebrews chapter 6, which are just scant bypass references, and then we get 28 verses in Hebrews chapter 7. We get a whole chapter on it, which we're going to do now in 10 minutes. Not really.

Time frame, it is interesting. It's nice round numbers now. It was a thousand years between the historical reference to the prophetic statement in Scripture, and it was a thousand years later, was it not? First century AD? When here we have on the scene a biblical explanation for what this is and how it all fits.

The nature of this, of course, is to show its messianic fulfillment, that God had a plan that he would merge the offices of king and priest into one, not to mention prophet. And that was dealt with in the first chapter.

What's interesting about this, the distinction from the Levitical priesthood. That's what the whole chapter is about. And if you turn over your worksheet, once you jot that down, the distinction of the Levitical priesthood, the spaghetti chart on the back shows you the distinctions that are made.

And if you're thinking he's just trying to make this complicated, he wants to be Gene Scott, what's going on with him? It's not true. Matter of fact, my prayer all week long, my prayer for my wife—my wife, how's the sermon going? I just want to make this as simple as possible. And then I produced a chart that looks like that.

It's really not that complicated. It's just that the writer of Hebrews continues to hit on some main themes. We could probably find 15 nuances of distinction, but I want to summarize them into five because I think those are the major things as you read this, and I probably read this 50 times this week and grappled with the text and the language and everything else. This is the best I can do to summarize the comparisons.

Let's read it, which we haven't done yet in this service. And then if you are quick with your eyeballs, you can see which paragraphs relate to the same themes. We won't note those right now, but you can pick them up.

Let's start verse number one. We've already read this, but let's read it again.

This is Melchizedek. King of Salem and priest. That's the interesting thing of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings, and he blessed him. And Abraham gave him a



tenth of everything. First, his name means king of righteousness. And then also, if you look at where he's from, it means king of Salem, means king of peace.

Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God, he remains a priest forever. Now, don't get tripped out on that. More on that in a minute. But all that's telling us is we don't know what tribe he's from. We don't know what lineage he has. We don't know where he came from. We don't know who his parents are. We don't know anything about his kids. We don't know anything about the priesthood. It is some bizarre, simple reference. Okay? And well, we'll get to that.

Verse 4. Think of how great he was. Now he's going to establish the superiority. Even the patriarch Abraham, the leader of the country, gave him a tenth of the plunder. Now the law requires that the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people, that is their brothers, even though their brothers are descended from Abraham. This man, however, did not trace his descendants from Levi. Yet he collected a tenth from Abraham, and he blessed him who had the promises.

Without doubt. Now, this is important to note. The lesser person is blessed by the greater person. The lesser person, Abraham, is blessed by the greater person, Melchizedek.

In this one case, the tenth is collected by men who die. He's already dealt with the concept of an endless priesthood. But in the other case, this is the comparison, by him who is declared to be living. Not only Melchizedek, who has no beginning and end, no lineage and disgust, but Christ, of course, the resurrected Christ.

One might even say—now this is obviously just a poetic way to put it—that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham. Because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor. He's not stating biology here. He's saying some might say that. I mean, if Levi is subordinate to Abraham, the father of the nation, wouldn't it seem that he would have to be subordinate to the man that Abraham shows deference to? The superiority.

Verse 11. If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood, for on the basis of it the law was given to the people, why was there still a need for another priest to come, one in the order of Melchizedek? That's a reference to Psalm 110. Not in the order of Aaron. That's the bizarre passage that we could never put together for a thousand years.

For when there was a change of the priesthood, there also must be a change of the law. That's what the new covenant promises in Jeremiah 31 were all about. He of whom these things are said belong to a different tribe. No one from that tribe had ever served at the altar. Talking about Christ.

For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah. In regard to that tribe, Moses said nothing about priests. Of course, they were prohibited.

Verse 15. And what we have said is even more clear. If another priest like Melchizedek appears. Now, what's interesting about that? Well, it's not on the basis of the regulation of ancestry, but to the basis of the power of an indestructible life, which was enigma, literally, but it's a reality in the resurrected Jesus.



For it's declared, you are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek. That's a quotation, obviously, of Psalm 110:4.

Verse 18. The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless, for the law made nothing perfect, and a better hope is introduced by which we draw near to God. That's the work of the priest. Allows us to have access to God.

Verse 20. And it was not without an oath. Now we're back to chapter 6. Others became priests without any oath, but he, that is Christ, became a priest with an oath when God said in that Messianic psalm to him, the Lord is sworn and he will not change his mind. You are a priest forever.

Because of this oath, which was so important in chapter 6, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant. This is a better covenant, a new covenant. It supplants the old, verse 23.

Now, there have been many of those priests since death prevented them from continuing in office. That's why we had so many. They kept dying. But because Jesus lives forever, we're back to that theme again. He has a permanent priesthood.

Therefore, he is able to save completely those who come to him through him because he always lives to intercede for them.

Then one last final note, rising the whole chapter. Such a high priest, he meets our needs. He's holy and blameless, pure and set apart from sinners. He's exalted above the heavens.

Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day first for his own sins. That's what you had to do on Yom Kippur. You had to sacrifice for yourself and your own family first and then for the sins of the people.

He sacrificed for their sins once and for all when he offered not a lamb, but he offered himself.

For the law appoints high priests, men who are weak. But the oath, Psalm 110, verse 4, which came after the law, appointed the Son who has been made perfect forever.

Now, if you can do it, if your lap is big enough, keep that on one knee and pull this one out now. We can start the sermon. Aren't you glad we're about to start the sermon?

1. Understand That Melchizedek Trumps Levi

Then you've got a chart under it that looks like this. Understand that Melchizedek, the whole point of chapter 7, is better than Levi and the Levitical priesthood. It trumps it. It's better. In every way, the argument that he's developing is trying to support that and fortify that argument.

We have observations on this bizarre chart. Observations summarized in four, and they're all a balanced comparison of the Levitical priesthood and this bizarre and interesting Melchizedekian priesthood that Christ is claiming.



And let's just summarize what we just read and give them some words so you don't have to carry this chart around. You can summarize the entire seventh chapter in this tiny little neat chart. Chart four. Here we go.

Number one, we read there in the beginning of this text that we have a priest who is a king. That's unlike the Levitical priests who could not be kings. You can't merge those two classes in Israel. He makes that point in verses 1 through 1 and 2, and then he makes it again, if you have this on the other knee, verses 11 through 14.

Judah doesn't produce priests, but we have a priest who is a king. Jesus is presented in Scripture as king and priest. He not only leads us for God's sake, he also speaks to God on our behalf. He is our mediator. He is the one who stands in the gap and represents us to God.

Old Testament, priests couldn't be kings. New Testament, the king and the priest are one.

A reference that you might want to jot down in that box, priests are not kings, is 2 Chronicles chapter 26. 2 Chronicles chapter 26.

Look at a king who tries to go because he's so full of himself and burn incense in the altar in the temple. Have you read that story? He goes in there and now he's so full of himself and that's what the Bible says. His great success in his political campaigns and his military campaigns, he thought he was the guy.

So he went in to burn incense and all the priests rallied around and said, you can't do that. And he goes, just watch me. And so they watched him as he went in and tried to burn incense. And the Bible says leprosy started to break out on his forehead just as he started to burn incense in the altar. And he became a leper.

And you know what those were like in the Old Testament, right? They had to build him a little house, a little shack outside. He couldn't even enter the temple grounds anymore because he was a leper for the rest of his life. And God says, that's what you get if you think you're a king and think you can be a priest.

That is under the old covenant. The old covenant, Levi, the tribe of Levi, their task could not mix with the tribe of Judah and their task. King, priest, no. Two different things.

That's a fascinating passage, which starts in verse 11, by the way. 2 Chronicles 26:11 through 21.

Second half, do you still have this on that other knee, this chart? Look at the next section here. Without father or mother, without genealogy. Look, that connects with it. In one case, verse 8, tenth collected by men who die. Then again in verse 15, talking about people that die and people that don't die. Down in verse 23, again, many of those priests, but death prevented them from continuing. But Christ, he lives forever.

Do you see the theme reoccurring one, two, three, four times in this text about the difference between Levitical priests and the Melchizedekian priesthood of Christ?

The point is priests die and they always need replacements. If you have one and you like him and he's good and every Yom Kippur he represents you, you know what? Don't get too attached



because he's dying and you're going to need another one and your kids will need another one and your grandkids will need another one.

And all that stuff that's done in the temple on your behalf, you're going to have to have replacement priests every generation because they're all subject to death.

The point is Jesus, of course, he lives because of his resurrection and he needs no replacement. His mediatorial role never ends. And therefore, as this text says, as was predicted a thousand years before Christ came, he is a priest forever and will always intercede for his people.

Thirdly, look at the left knee or the right knee. You've got a section here in verse number nine and verse number—I'm sorry—verses four through seven and verses nine and 10, where there is a discussion here about the greatness of the Melchizedekian priesthood over the Levitical priesthood.

Even Abraham deferred to the Melchizedekian priesthood. But you've got the Levitical priesthood, which is as far as you can go in Israel. This one supersedes it and transcends it.

Let's put it this way. L3, Levitical priesthood, third point: priests, they were great in Israel. Absolutely. You couldn't get any greater.

Who's the holy guy? Who's the guy who can speak to God for you in Israel? Well, it's Levitical priests. But of course, the Melchizedekian priesthood is not only great in Israel, he is greater than Israel because the leader of Israel deferred to him in Genesis chapter 14.

And the point of the text is the Melchizedekian priesthood trumps the Levitical priesthood. Why? Because it's a merging of two great offices in Israel, because he lives forever and never needs a replacement, and because Abraham showed, and everything about his Levitical priesthood—or Melchizedekian priesthood showed—that it's better and superior and outranks the Levitical priesthood.

Verses 20 through 22. We had the injection of this concept of oath, which again, I said, is only there because it comes on the heels of chapter 6, which said that the oaths were there for who's good, for our good.

Why? Because God needs to promise and swear and double dog swear or cross their heart or pinky swear or whatever. No, why? Because he wants us to be absolutely assured.

And as a matter of fact, that's where this text goes. It's where the text goes. It's worth reading again. He says in verse 20, he's not without an oath. Other priests, no oath. This priest, verse 21, with an oath, and God said he's sworn. That's a Psalm 110 passage.

And then he says, because of this oath, Jesus has become a—here's a great word, and it was meant to assure our hearts—a guarantee of a better covenant, which he's going to then elaborate on when he talks about the new covenant, Jeremiah 31.

What's the point? It should assure our hearts. What did we have in the Levitical priesthood? Nothing close. As a matter of fact, let's put it this way. Priests were there by prescription, which was because you need something to give you a sense that God will one day forgive you. That's why



the blood and bulls of goats never did anything, but it does remind us God cares, and he is going to somehow represent us before the Father, the Holy One, we're not.

But the Melchizedekian priesthood in Christ, the ultimate fulfillment of that, is a priest by God's oath. And that means that because it's perfect, because it endures, because he doesn't die, because he's greater than Israel, and we as a bunch of Gentiles need that third point.

The fourth point is that, you know what? God said, this is absolutely it. I've sworn and I will not change. The point of that is emotional for us. And if you think back to chapter 6, God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his promise very clear. He confirmed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, a promise and an oath, in which it's impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged.

God wants us to say we've got an intercessor, and we can be encouraged by that.

Fifthly, if you look at the bottom of this text, the priesthood was weak. Why? Because it was led by sinners.

If I go to the golf course and I want to take a golfing lesson, I don't want a guy who's slicing it over the fence. I want a guy who can do it right. And the problem is you've got a priest that has to go into the holy of holies and spend time making sure he confesses all his secret sins, all his foibles, all his bad habits, all his bad feelings and sinful thoughts, because he is one that, like us, is sinful.

Therefore, I'm thinking, how in the world is he representing me very well before God? How does he lead me to God if he himself is a sinner? And that's a point well taken in this text.

And Christ, in the order of Melchizedek, is the perfect and holy one. And just to read that great text again, verse 28: law appoints men, they're weak, but the oath appoints a Son who's been made perfect forever.

And to quote verse 26, what does that mean? Holy, blameless, set apart from sinner, he meets our need. That's the kind of high priest we need.

The point of chapter 7 is Melchizedekian priesthood is better than the Levitical priesthood, and he sums up in five ways how that's true.

This is worth going home and unraveling further, but the so what's going to pop up, and let's deal with that for the last five minutes here.

So what? Great. I'm not tempted to be a priest. I've never aspired to be one. I'm not in awe of the priesthood. What does this mean for us?

A couple things. If we understand the priesthood as we tried to in chapter 5 and a little bit in chapter 6, we ought to get to the place where we say this: I am grateful.

Just because I thought your hand would be tired, I gave you some extra words here so you didn't have to write them all down.

I want us to be grateful. Why? For the finished, completed, accomplished work of the perfect priest.



When I stand here and say I know myself, I'm a sinful person, and I want to be right with God so I don't have to go to hell, and I can spend eternity in a place that's good and not bad. I need someone to plead my case.

I can stand back and say, I got a perfect person going to bat for me. He's the designated hitter. I hand him the bat. I say, hey, I can't do it. Judgment day. I need you to take care of it for me. He goes, fine, I'll take care of this. As a matter of fact, I've already hit it over the fence. It's done. Deal. Score. You're in. You're in the kingdom. We have to be grateful for that.

I got a message on the back that I referenced for you—or we just try to make that something we're going to hold on tightly to—the finished work of Christ. So what? Let's be grateful. We've got a high priest that's better than any high priest of the Old Testament.

Secondly, pointy finger number two, we've got to realize that our access to God is now so good, it's like we're priests. And that's a bizarre concept. Did you catch that?

Realize that our access to God, because we're coming in on the coattails of the great high priest, who's perfect and holy and set apart from sinners. And he said, come on, I'm going to make you right before the Father. It is so good and so complete and so perfect and so finished, it's like now I'm a priest.

Because you don't go hang out in the holy of holies. You don't hang out with God. Because you're a sinner. We'll let the priest do that.

But this priest says, no, you're coming with me. As a matter of fact, I'm placing you in me, in Christ. You now are going to be in the very presence of God.

Do you know that if you look for the concept of the priesthood in the New Testament, this is the only major discussion of it you'll ever have. But you'll have a few mentions of it three times in the book of Revelation. As we look at the ultimate dwelling of God being among men. And the concept of God pulling people from the world out from among others. He says you are now a kingdom and priests to God.

What does that mean? There's some mediatorial role? No, the point of that text and those texts and those references is he got complete access to God. Our high priest was so good he took us in the Holy of Holies with him.

Matter of fact, we should look at one passage in this regard. 1 Peter chapter 2. This is the other reference that you'll find. There's only six references to the priesthood outside of Hebrews in all of the New Testament unless you're talking about in the Gospels the historical Caiaphas and those priests. But when it comes to New Testament theology there's only six references: three of them are all synonymous in the book of Hebrews that one day the eschatological picture is I got access to the very presence of God. Then there's only two other passages, 1 Peter 2 and Romans 16.

Let's look at this one. I won't turn you to Romans 16, but it's the same concept. The two-fold concept here. One is just like Revelation 1, 5, and 20. And it's found in 1 Peter 2. Are you with me?



Verse 4. As you come to him—that's a concept that, again, we just kind of yawn our way through. That's a big thing. We're now in the presence of God.

The living stone, rejected by men, but chosen by God and precious to him. You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house. Are you a house? No. Metaphorically, are you a house? Well, yeah, I guess we are, kind of. But you're not a house, right? You're not a house. You don't have termites. You're not a house. You're not a dwelling. Okay? This is a concept, a metaphor. Keep reading.

And to be a holy priesthood. Are you a priest? Well, not really. Not a priest. But, you know, metaphorically, and an analogous concept, you are a priesthood. Look at what you do as a priest: you offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God.

Even when a successful Judean king wants to offer sacrifices in the at the altar he will be struck with leprosy because it is not acceptable before God. Gotta have the Levites do that.

Now because Christ has done his work so well I am one who can offer sacrifices directly to him and he accepts it.

When we worship just about a half an hour ago or an hour ago or two hours ago whenever we got started, when you sang praises to God, the Bible says he accepts it as worship as though you were a priest that is fully authorized to bring him offerings. That's a new concept. That's a new covenant concept.

Now, there's another aspect to this. You mean there is no mediatorial priesthood in the New Testament? Kind of. Keep reading. Here's the next aspect of it.

Verse 8. A stone—now he turns to the negative—the people that reject him, that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. Right? They're rejecting it. They stumble because they disobey the message, which is also what they were destined for.

But you, now we're talking about thinking about the lost people, are a chosen people, here it comes again, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you might, notice the mediatorial role here now, declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light, which is exactly what Romans 16 says as well.

Paul says, my priestly duty is to share the gospel to a dark world, to lost people. So we are like priests now, because we've ridden in on the robe of the great priest, the Melchizedekian priest, Christ. And now I can worship God directly, and he accepts it, and one day we'll live in his presence.

But furthermore, I can look back at the lost world, and I can say, you need to get right with God. And in one small sense, there is a reflection of the priesthood there, that I'm saying to my lost neighbors and family members and friends, connect with me. Look at me. Come to me. Listen to me. And I will take you to him. That's the priesthood function.

That's the only two concepts of priesthood outside of Hebrews chapter 5, 6, and 7 in Scripture.



Number three. Pointy finger number three. Here's the thing. You don't need another priest. So reject all offers for priesthood in your life. You don't need one.

If you're a non-Christian, I guess you need a priesthood because you need some Christian to say, come listen to me and I'll take you to God. But if you're a Christian, do you need a priest? No. People call him for him all the time, but you don't need one.

Why? Because you is one, right? You don't need a priest. You are a priest in many ways. And beyond that, you have the perfect priest, the Melchizedekian priesthood. And for you to look out and grasp for another mediatorial role on this planet is an insult to the priesthood of Christ. Don't.

Now I know a lot of people, well, isn't it just word games? Well, there are some people that it isn't word games to them. They think that they play a mediatorial role in your life. Therefore, we reject the priesthood. On that basis, we don't need mediatorial work. It's been done.

And to have someone step up and say, I'll talk to God on your behalf. You know what? Unless we're talking about prayer and intercessory prayer. If we're talking about someone setting themselves up saying, I am different than you and I have access to God that you don't have. And as a Christian, I have to play a mediating role for you. You reject all that.

And even the people, because they haven't sat through this sermon, that want to, they want to extract this little interesting, mysterious guy named Melchizedek and make a priesthood out of that. Go on the internet and look up the concept of the Melchizedekian priesthood. You'll find a ton of Mormon websites, right? You ex-Mormons, are you with me on this one? The whole Melchizedekian priesthood.

You'll find pictures of Joseph Smith receiving the Melchizedekian priesthood from all these, you know, angelic beings. We, we reject it. Joseph Smith or anybody else who wants to claim the Melchizedekian priesthood is a joke and a liar because the Melchizedekian priesthood was fulfilled in Christ. Therefore we don't need a priest. I reject all priests.

Okay. Reject all priests, including those that want to claim they're of the Melchizedekian order. Okay. There was only one Melchizedekian ordered priest, and that was the one sworn about in Psalm 110:4.

Ask the ex-Mormons about the Melchizedekian priesthood in Joseph Smith. As a matter of fact, they will say in their writings that the current president of the church now is a priest in the order of Melchizedek.

Pointy finger number four. I think all of this, as I sat back and said, God, what is this doing for me in the study of Melchizedek, which was like a marathon session this week, I'm impressed with God's word, and I think you should be too.

It is impressive what God has done. And not having a guy step on the scene and say, I'm all these things, and it's all new to you. I realize that, but this is what I am.

You have hints and sometimes clear declarative statements that didn't make any sense without Christ. And God put those things in the text some 2,000 years before he came as it relates to the Melchizedekian priesthood, and then 1,000 years before he came, and then time just perfectly, the



next shoe fell, and here comes Messiah saying, oh, you know that Melchizedekian thing you didn't understand? Let me explain it to you.

And now it makes perfect sense in the New Testament.

Let's pray.

God, this is so important for us to recognize that you are a God who has met every need that we have, every real need that we have in the coming of Jesus Christ, that he has been for us.

And again, it loses its power, I recognize, for us 21st century Gentiles. But God, certainly with all of the richness of the Old Testament Levitical law, he has become for us the complete and perfect fulfillment of what we needed.

And whether we recognize the ceremonial connections or not, we stand here today as sinful people in need of fellowship with a perfect God or we're in big trouble because we'll have to pay for our sins for eternity, and we want forgiveness.

And the only way to get that is to have someone come and live the life that we need to live in a container of humanity. And then to die a death that we deserve to die with the wrath of God being spilt out on him. And then rising from the dead and pleading our case as the great high priest who has purified sins.

Not only because he needed some forgiveness himself. No, he was perfect. But he pleaded our case and cleansed our sin and took it away because of his own sacrifice of his own life. What an amazing truth.

And God, we stand here today able to talk to you, able to offer you songs because you have done the work through Christ.

Thanks for the Melchizedekian priesthood where someone from the line of Judah can also serve as the greatest priest of all to whom Abraham gave deference. We thank you for that and we praise you in his name.

In Jesus' name we say, amen.