

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Bible Study Notes: Book of Hebrews

6/22/16

Hebrews Chapter 7

Melchizedek the Priest - Verses 1-10

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.

7:2 The writer uses this story from Genesis 14:18-20 to show that Christ is even greater than Abraham, father of the Jewish nation, and Levi (Abraham's descendant). Therefore, the Jewish priesthood (made up of Levi's descendants) was inferior to Melchizedek's priesthood (a type of Christ's priesthood).

7:3-10 Melchizedek was a priest of God Most High (see the note on Genesis 14:18 and his profile). He is said to remain a priest forever (see also Psalm 110:4), because his priesthood has no record of beginning or ending. He was a priest of God in Salem (Jerusalem) long before the nation of Israel and the regular priesthood began.

Jesus Like Melchizedek - Verses 11-21

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." 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.'"

7:11-17 Jesus' high-priestly role was superior to that of any priest of Levi, because the Messiah was a priest of a higher order (Psalm 110:4). If the Jewish priests and their laws had been able to save people, why would God need to send Christ as a priest, who came not from the tribe of Levi (the priestly tribe) but from the tribe of Judah? The animal sacrifices had to be repeated, and they offered only temporary forgiveness; but Christ's sacrifice was offered once, and it offers total and permanent forgiveness. Under the new covenant, the Levitical priesthood was canceled in favor of Christ's role as high priest. Because Christ is our high priest, we need to pay attention to him. No minister, leader, or Christian friend can substitute for Christ's work and for his role in our salvation.

7:18-19 The law was not intended to save people or to make them perfect, but to point out sin (see Romans 3:20; 5:20) and to point toward Christ (see Galatians 3:24-25). Salvation comes through Christ, whose sacrifice brings forgiveness for our sins. Being ethical, working diligently to help others, and giving to charitable causes are all commendable, but all of our good deeds cannot save us or make us right with God.

7:19 How can you draw near to God? The Bible makes it clear that your own body is God's temple. Your spirit needs and wants closeness with God. You want to know the living God personally, not as an idea or concept, not as a distant monarch. You can draw near to God through prayer, worship, and Bible meditation. You need not live like a monk, but you probably need more prayer in your life. The habit of worship has become a convenience to be wedged between sports and other recreations. Instead, make worship your top priority. Bible meditation may include verse memory, songs, and quiet personal reading. The Bible is the Word of God for you. Use it every day and you will draw nearer and nearer to God.

Verses 22-28

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.

7:22-24 Jesus has a permanent priesthood. He should be everyone's ultimate authority for spiritual life. In our culture today, however, many people have advisers and counselors whom they elevate almost to the role of priest. People look to political leaders, lawyers, physicians, insurance agents, and financial advisers to provide hope, long life, and security against all disasters. Many Christians regard the advice of priests and ministers, Christian friends, and even pop musicians before they consider the words of Jesus written in the Bible. Make sure your first allegiance and priority is to know and follow the advice given by Jesus.

7:25 No one can add to what Jesus did to save us; our past, present, and future sins are all forgiven, and Jesus is with the Father as a sign that our sins are forgiven. As our high priest, Christ is our advocate, the mediator between us and God. He looks after our interests and intercedes for us with God. The Old Testament high priest went before God once a year to plead for the forgiveness of the nation's sins; Christ makes perpetual intercession before God for us. Christ's continuous presence in heaven with the Father assures us that our sins have been paid for and forgiven (see Romans 8:33-34; Hebrews 2:17-18; 4:15-16; 9:24). This wonderful assurance frees us from guilt and from fear of failure. If you are a Christian, remember that Christ has paid the price for your sins once and for all (see also 9:24-28).

7:27 In Old Testament times when animals were sacrificed, they were cut into pieces, the parts were washed, the fat was burned, the blood was sprinkled, and the meat was boiled. Blood was demanded as atonement for sin, and God accepted animal blood to cover the people's sin (Leviticus 17:11). Because of the sacrificial system, the Israelites were generally aware that sin costs someone something and that they themselves were sinful. Many people take Christ's work on the cross for granted. They don't realize how costly it was for Jesus to secure our forgiveness—it cost him his life and painful, temporary separation from his Father (Matthew 27:46; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

Because Jesus died once for all, he brought the sacrificial system to an end. He forgave sins—past, present, and future. The Jews did not need to go back to the old system because Christ, the perfect sacrifice, completed the work of redemption. You don't have to look for another way to have your sins forgiven—Christ was the final sacrifice for you.

7:28 So much is attributed to Jesus in this chapter that it might appear that there is nothing you need to do, or can do, to make salvation a reality for you. And that is true. Jesus has done it all. Nothing you do can improve his work. Nothing you do adds to God's acceptance of Jesus' sacrifice. So how do the benefits of Jesus' sacrifice become yours? You accept the gift of salvation by faith, trusting entirely in Jesus for salvation. You can do that now through a simple prayer: "Dear God, I trust in Jesus alone. Please forgive my sins through him, and give me the eternal life secured by him. Amen."