

**Jesus: Our Great High Priest Forever**  
**(Week 13)**  
**Hebrews 7:1-11**  
**“The Mysterious Melchizedek”**

**Introduction**

I recently changed *Bibles*. I had been preaching and teaching out of my old NIV translation for the past thirty years. I loved that *Bible*. I had read it and carried it around so much that I actually wore out two leather covers, and the inside binding was starting to come apart. As a Bible teacher, I have certain criteria that are very important to me when choosing a Bible. I want a translation, not a paraphrase. I need large print (you'll be old one day too), and I want something that is easy to read and understand. My old 1984 NIV worked just fine for many years, but its time had come and gone. There have been many translations, since it was printed, that are much better renderings of the original texts, but I was so very attached to my old *Bible*. Why? I had read it so much, that I could actually close my eyes and visualize exactly where many of my favorite verses were located on the pages. That *Bible* had become like an old friend, as familiar as a favorite old t-shirt or work-boots (it's a guy thing), and I hated to set it aside for a newer model. But, I eventually did. I changed *Bibles*. After doing a little research, I switched to a large print CSB version. Now that I have made the change, I'm glad that I did, for I am finding that my new *Bible* is a much better translation. The more that I do my word studies of the original text, the more I prefer the newer version. I guess that I should have made a change long ago. But... as most of you would agree, change is hard.

Keeping this in mind, now think about how difficult that it must have been for first century Jews to abandon their Jewish heritage and forsake their religious system that had been handed down for generations. And for what? Jesus, the very One Who had been crucified by their own religious leaders. If they had persecuted Him, then what would they do to His followers? And not only that, just who were His followers anyway? A bunch of uneducated fishermen and reformed tax collectors! Not the most impressive of pedigrees, just a bunch of nobodies really! If God truly intended to do a powerful new work, then why would He choose men like these to be His representatives (**1 Corinthians 1:27**)? There was just something about those guys. They possessed something that the well educated, well groomed, religious leaders did not. They had the power of The Holy Spirit. There was no denying the powerful message that they preached: A message of sins forgiven by the power of the cross of Christ, and an undeniable resurrection that guaranteed eternal life for all who would believe. Yes, this “new” version of salvation by grace through faith was no doubt a “better” covenant. But change... well change **is** hard.

The writer of *Hebrews* knew full well what he was asking his readers to do; walk away from the Law of Moses and the priestly traditions of the Levitical priesthood and place the full weight of their faith and hope on Jesus Christ and Him crucified once for all sin. It was a drastic change indeed, but without question it was a change from an old inferior covenant to a new and better one. Remember the three key words in the book of *Hebrews*: **Better**, **Perfect**, and **Heaven**. Jesus had come to show a **Better** way. He came as a **Perfection** of the *Old Testament* Law, and a **Heavenly** version that was meant to do away with an inferior earthy system. The writer wanted them to understand that although God had given them The Law through Moses, and that the Law was good, it had actually always been God's intention to replace The Law with something better. He had been “previewing” this coming change throughout the scriptures as far back as *Genesis*, and well, frankly, the very ones who should have seen it coming, the ones who best knew the scriptures, had missed it entirely. Even Abraham, the patriarch of the Jews had known of The One Who would one day come and replace *The Old Testament* sacrificial order of things (**John 8:56**). In fact, he had actually met one who foreshadowed the coming of Christ. His name was Melchizedek, a priest/king of an ancient order, who met Abraham when the patriarch returned from his daring rescue of his nephew Lot in **Genesis Chapter 14**. Melchizedek was an *Old Testament* “preview” of The Messiah, Who would come to bring blessing to His people. He represents the “**Prophetic Priesthood**”, the “**Permanent Priesthood**”, and the “**Perfected Priesthood**” that would one day be realized in Jesus Christ. This is his story.

### **The Prophetic Priesthood**

Abraham's nephew, Lot, would have fit right in with today's "what's in it for me" kind of culture. The selfish young man was always looking for a way to improve his "lot", so to speak. He left the company of his uncle after a series of disputes between his men and Abraham's men. Lot was given the option to choose which direction he would go, and being the consummate opportunist, he chose to move his flocks to Sodom. The city had a reputation for being exceedingly wicked, but it was also well watered and prosperous, so Lot decided to move there, giving no thought to the effects that the wicked place would have upon him and his family. I never cease to be amazed at the people who believe that they can "tame" sin. Many a well intentioned person has found that sin will find a way to destroy those who get too close. **Proverbs 6:27** so eloquently states:

**"Can a man embrace fire and his clothes not be burned?"**

Sin, yes ALL sin, has its consequence. Lot thought that he could move to a wicked place and not be affected, but he was wrong. Soon after he moved there, war (the first war ever mentioned in scripture) came to Sodom, and the city was overthrown. Lot was carried away as a captive along with everything that he had worked so hard to accumulate. If someone had not been willing to intervene on Lot's behalf, he would have remained a captive for the rest of his days. But thankfully, Lot had someone who had adopted him as a son. His name was Abram, and his name means "Exalted Father". It was Abram who raised an army to come to Lot's rescue. God was with Abram and gave him a great victory over four kings and their combined armies (**Genesis 14:1-16**). Abraham recovered all that had been lost, and returned home bringing with him a fortune in goods, as well as, the rescued captives. The fame of Abram must have spread like wildfire throughout the land of Canaan. He had accomplished, by God's might, what the five kings of the plain, along with their armies, had been unable to do. He had routed the enemy and brought back the spoils of war with him. Upon his triumphant return, Abram was met by a very interesting individual. His name was Melchizedek, and he was the king of Salem (ancient Jerusalem).

Very little is known about this ancient king. In fact, there are only four verses in the entire *Old Testament* that are dedicated to Melchizedek (**Genesis 14:18-20; Psalm 110:4**). Now that's not exactly what you would consider "top billing" among the who's who of *The Bible*! But, The Holy Spirit, in His infinite wisdom, decided to introduce this ancient priest/king at this point in The Holy Scriptures for a specific purpose. His intent was to use Melchizedek's appearing as a foreshadowing of a great Priest/King Who was yet to come. You see, *The Bible*, yes the entire *Bible*, is the story of Jesus Christ, and Melchizedek is yet another picture or "type" of Christ given in the scriptures. His very nature **prophesies** to the coming of The Messiah.

The name Melchizedek (pronounced Melkee-tsedek) actually comes from two Hebrew words: *Melech* meaning "king" and *Tsedek* meaning "righteousness". In other words he was "the king of righteousness". Melchizedek was the ruler of the ancient city of Salem (modern day Jerusalem). The word Salem comes from the Hebrew, *Shalom*, meaning "peace". So Melchizedek was the "King of Righteousness and Peace", which is a perfect description of The Lord Jesus Christ. He gave His life to satisfy the very righteousness of God for our sins, and in doing so, He has brought us into peace with God.

**"What The Law could not do, since it was weakened by the flesh, God did. He condemned sin in the flesh by sending His Own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh as a sin offering, in order that The Law's requirement would be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to The Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to The Spirit have their minds set on the things of The Spirit. Now the mind-set of the flesh is death, but the mind-set of The Spirit is life and peace."**

**Romans 8:3-6 (CSB)**

You see, in Jesus, Righteousness and Peace have come together as one (**Psalm 85:10**). The very name Melchizedek prophetically points to the finished work of Christ upon the cross.

Not only that, but notice what Melchizedek does before he blesses Abraham in **Genesis 14:18**. *The Bible* says that He brought out “bread and wine” for Abraham! Now some commentators have mistakenly (I believe) said that this is not pointing to the body and blood of Christ. They say things like, “Bread and Wine were very common items that were served to honored guest in those days.” Well that may be the case, but so was goat’s milk and cheese! I believe that Melchizedek, a “type” of Christ gave Abraham bread and wine before he blessed Abraham in order to point to The Christ, Who would one day offer us **His Body** and **His Blood**, so that **WE** can be blessed. There are no “random verses” in scripture my friends. Every word of it is “God breathed” (**2 Timothy 3:16**), and **ALL** of it points us to Christ.

Not only was Melchizedek a king, but he was a priest as well (**Genesis 18**). Never in all of Israel’s history had God allowed one man to hold the offices of both priest and king. One Israelite King, named Uzziah, had actually tried to enter the sanctuary of The LORD to burn incense, and he was struck with leprosy for his trouble (**2 Chronicles 26:16-20**). According to the Law of Moses, God had specifically forbid any besides the Levites to serve before the altar of Israel. However, here, hundreds of years before The Law of Moses, we see Melchizedek called of God to be Both king and priest. Why? Because he is meant to demonstrate a superior order of the priesthood that would be established by Jesus Himself, as our Prophet, Priest, and King. You see, Melchizedek was a **Prophetic** picture of a **better** priesthood that was to come.

### **The Permanent Priesthood**

**“The LORD has sworn an oath and will not take it back: ‘You are a priest forever according to the pattern of Melchizedek.’”** **Psalms 110:4**

After many centuries had passed, The Holy Spirit once again inspires someone to remind us of the priesthood of Melchizedek. This time, the writer is King David, who was led by The Spirit to pen the words to a “messianic psalm” (**Psalms 110**, a song about the coming Messiah). In the song, God swears an oath that the coming Messiah King, Who will reign upon David’s throne, will also be a priest. And, not just any priest, but a priest **forever**, according to the pattern of Melchizedek. You see, with the majority of the influential people in scripture, we are given their lineage. We can trace King David all the way back to Adam, and the same is true of all the patriarchs. We know who their parents were, as well as, their descendants. But Melchizedek is quite another story. We know nothing of where he came from or where he went after his incredible encounter with Abraham. He just appears out of “thin air”, so to speak, and then disappears, just as mysteriously. Does this mean that he was some sort of “super human”, or maybe even an angel? Not at all!

Melchizedek was just a man, just like any of us. Some scholars have attempted to argue that he was not a normal person, but rather a “Christophany” (Old Testament appearing of Christ before His incarnation). I do not believe that this is the case, however, and I think that the writer of *Hebrews* makes that clear for us in **verse 3**:

**“Without father, mother, or genealogy, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life, but RESEMBLING the Son of God, he remains a priest forever.”** **Hebrews 7:3**

So you see, if Melchizedek had been the Christ, the scriptures would not say that he “resembled” The Son of God, but rather, they would simply say that he WAS The Son of God. No, Melchizedek was just an ordinary man. But the reason that we are given no genealogy with his introduction, and the reason we know nothing about his birth and death is because the Holy Spirit wanted to use Melchizedek as a picture of what Christ would be like when He came: The Son of God, without beginning nor end, and Our Great High Priest **FOREVER!** This is the reason that Melchizedek appears to us in such a mysterious way, so that through his life, we can see Christ.

Come to think of it, isn’t that the way that we are called as Christians to live our lives? We have been chosen to live in such a way that people can actually see Jesus **IN US!** I imagine that old Melchizedek was honored to be used by The Holy Spirit in such a marvelous way. Wouldn’t it be

wonderful to know that when you come to the end of your days, that people will have seen Christ in you? I must confess, I've been to a lot of funerals, where the people who claimed to be "Christian" sure hadn't lived up to the name. How about you? Did you know that the word "Christian" actually means "Little Christ"? Is that what you are? Are you living your life in such a way that people see a living Christ in everything that you say and do? Melchizedek did. And that's why we're still talking about him almost 4,000 years later! He was a wonderful picture of the **perpetual priesthood** of Christ Jesus.

### **The Perfected Priesthood**

**"The sons of Levi, who receive the priestly office, have a command according to the law to collect a tenth from the people — that is, from their brothers and sisters — though they have also descended from Abraham. But one without this lineage collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises. Without a doubt, the inferior is blessed by the superior. In the one case, men who will die receive a tenth, but in the other case, Scripture testifies that he lives. And in a sense, Levi himself, who receives a tenth, has paid a tenth through Abraham, for he was still in his ancestor when Melchizedek met him."** **Hebrews 7:5-10**

The author lays out his argument that the priesthood of Jesus is therefore a superior priesthood to the that of the Levites. Why? Because it is an eternal priesthood in the order of Melchizedek. The priesthood of Melchizedek preceded that of the Levites, and not only that, but because we have no record in scripture of the death of Melchizedek, his priesthood, in a sense, goes on forever. Thus the priesthood of Jesus Christ is an eternal priesthood, whereas, the Levites had to not only make continual sacrifices for sin, but they also had to appoint new priests over and over again to replace the ones who had died. And even beyond that, the Levites could only serve as priest until the age of fifty, before they had to retire. Melchizedek's priestly office was without beginning or end, and therefore, pointed us to a superior and eternal priesthood.

When Abraham met Melchizedek, he instantly became aware that he was in the presence of greatness, and therefore, he gave the priest/king a tenth (tithe) of the spoils that he brought back from the battle. So, in a sense, the Levites who were descended from Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek through their father Abraham, before they were ever born! Since the Levite priests, who for centuries collected the tithes of the Jewish people, had paid tithes to Melchizedek through Abraham, this is proof that the Priesthood of Melchizedek was better than that of the Levites.

Melchizedek also BLESSED Abraham. Therefore, he was the greater man. Only someone who is superior is able bless someone. In this way, he is a picture of The LORD Jesus. Jesus Our Great High Priest has indeed kept the promise of God, that all the nations of earth would be blessed through Abraham. It is through Jesus that we have received eternal life and forgiveness of sin. We have indeed been blessed by the One Who is superior.

The Levite priesthood was good in that it served its purpose until the **perfected** priesthood came to take its place. Jesus is our Great High Priest Forever, in the order of Melchizedek. There can be no better priesthood than this. His priesthood is both perfect and permanent. Or as the writer says:

**"Now if perfection came through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the law), what further need was there for another priest to appear, said to be according to the order of Melchizedek and not according to the order of Aaron?"** **Hebrews 7:11**

**Answer:** Perfection didn't come through the Law... it came in the person of Jesus: Our Great High Priest FOREVER!

And ALL of God's people said.....TRUTH!!!