



Hebrews 7:22-28

Today, we will discuss someone who has an unusual, yet interesting name, that being, Melchizedek. Chapter 7 spends a lot of ink focusing on Melchizedek until you get to the climax in the end. I do not want to spend a whole bunch of time on him because I really want to focus on Jesus. He must be our focus. Not Melchizedek, not ourselves, not the sourdough Jack you will eat at lunch after the service. Here are things you need to know about Melchizedek.

First, Melchizedek is one of these characters that come out of nowhere. Abraham wins a war and we meet this man in the aftermath of the fighting. He blesses Abraham and Abe gives him a tenth of the spoils he won in his victory.

Second, Melchizedek is unique in that he was a king and a priest. This was not possible under the Jewish law. In God's wisdom, he made the political and spiritual leaders accountable to the other.

Thirdly, his name and location are unique. Melchizedek translated means "king of righteousness." He is also the king of Salem, which translated means he is the "king of peace." Melchizedek then is the king of righteousness and the king of peace. As a result, many think Melchizedek is a pre-incarnate Jesus.

However, there are two main reasons that suggest he is not the pre-incarnate Christ.

1. The author spends the second part of the chapter saying that Jesus is the climax of the order of Melchizedek, indicating a similarity, but also distinction. As a result, though both Melchizedek and Jesus represent a better priesthood than those under the Mosaic Law, Jesus is one who follows the order of the Melchizedek priesthood, affirming a distinction.
2. While Abraham pays tithes to this King / Priest, he does not worship him. Melchizedek's entrance is not like what Joshua encounters when he sees a mysterious man known as the Commander of the Army in Joshua chapter 5, before his first military campaign at Jericho. On that occasion, once Joshua finds out his identity, he falls down on his knees in worship, in reverence, in homage. He knows this is a divine being from heaven.

So who is Melchizedek? No one knows for sure, I view him as this mysterious person who comes out of nowhere in the Abraham narrative. There are many mysterious things about this man because there is no recorded genealogy. He had no mother or father. No one knew his birthday. No one sees him leave; he was like the long ranger. I do not think he never had a mother or a father, or a birthday, it is just that no one knew these things about this mystery man. Finally, just when you thought he was gone, he reappears thousands of years later in the Psalms, and thousands of years after this in the Book of Hebrews, which gives him a sense that he is eternal.

Inevitably, not much is known about this person, which leads to his mystery. However, what we do know is that he is a foreshadow of the Great High Priest to come later, namely Jesus, who is the true king of righteousness and the true king of peace. He is the true eternal mediator. The main difference is that Jesus never comes and then leaves us for several thousands of years, he is the same as he was yesterday, and he is the same that he will be in the future. I hope that that encourages you.

Okay, it is time to devote the rest of this discussion to Jesus. Let's read verse 22-28. Here the writer of Hebrews compares Jesus to the former priesthood under the Law of Moses.

22 This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.

23 **The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office,** 24 but he holds his priesthood permanently, because **he continues forever.** 25 Consequently, **he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God** through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. 26 For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, **holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heaven** 27 He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, **since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.** 28 For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

Here are the spiritual nuggets we get from this passage.

1. Jesus priesthood is permanent (Eternal)

This is important because death had no power over Jesus. He conquered it! He squashed it! He obliterated it. The old priests eventually died and had to be replaced. This is why we refer to Jesus as the Living Hope. This is why we shout, Jesus is Alive! Practically this means you will never have to worry about losing your Great High Priest. You will never need to grieve for Jesus. With him, there is no funeral, no tombstone, no obituary! He will minister to you for the rest of your life and he will keep going. He is the spiritual "energy bunny."

We live in a culture where things don't last. Relationships! Employment! Lap Top Computers! Milk left in the Fridge! We begin having these things with a high because of the newness. Unfortunately, the 2nd Law of thermodynamics kicks in and these things slowly begin to erode. If it is a laptop, maybe not so slowly.

Jesus is resistant to erosion. Jesus is just as strong as he was in eternities past. He is a priest that has always and will continue to be your mediator between you and God. Folks, the cross, not the crucifix is the symbol of Christianity. Jesus is no longer on the cross, dead to the world. He is alive. He has left the cross. It remains empty as a testimony to his resurrection.

2. Jesus saves all who draw near

Because Jesus is part of an eternal priesthood he is able to save to save, as verse 25 states, to the uttermost of those that draw near to God. He has saved in the past. He saves presently. He will save in the future. However, he will not force you to draw near. He wants you to come willingly. He allows you to be receptive. But he waits for you to come to him and bridge the gap. And it does not matter what you have done in the past.

On Friday, there was a man named Fred, not a Christian, yet has come to the study for the last three weeks. He has not accepted Jesus yet, but he is drawing nearer. When he was asked what is holding him back, he responded that he has done many bad things in his life. Things that almost caused him to well up before us.

He is learning that just as we are not saved based on our accomplishments, we are not left out based on the bad things we have done. Fred is learning that he must not base heaven on his works, but instead on the accomplished works of Christ on the cross. Fred must realize that his salvation is not about him; it is about Jesus. He is starting to understand.

He is drawing near to the one who is able to save to the uttermost those who rely on him for salvation, not themselves!

3. Jesus lives to make intercession

What that means is Jesus is praying for you. He never asks, "How can I pray for you," and then forgets. He lives to make intercession. Praying for you is his nature. There are times in our lives where we feel overwhelmed, insecure, weak, and alone. There are times we wonder if anyone is for us because it seems everything is against us. Jesus is for you and he is interceding. He recognizes the challenges of life, he is aware of the tests God the Father puts before us. Many times he does not just take the problem away because he wants us to get stronger. He wants us to demonstrate our allegiance to him in times of duress. He is praying, "Lord help them to be faithful. Help them to get through this time with their hearts committed toward you."

The world's greatest intercessory prayer was the prayer that Jesus prayed in John 17 before he was murdered on the cross. In that prayer Jesus said, "I do not pray for these alone (the Disciples), but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; (You, vs. 21) that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me" (John 17:20-21).

Everyone in this room who trusts Jesus as their Savior is an answer to that fabulous intercession.

4. Jesus is sinless

As we mentioned before, the other high priests had to make two different sacrifices, one for their own sins; the other for the sins of the people. Yet Jesus lived a perfect life. Verse 26 describes Jesus as **holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heaven.**

There have been a lot of religious leaders throughout the history of the world. Mohammed, Buddha, Confucius, Ghandi--yet as great as these men may have been, none could claim to be sinless, except Jesus, the great high priest.

Many times if people do not put their trust in religious leaders, they place it on themselves. They think I am a good person. I haven't hurt anyone. I have sacrificed for others. I have raised my children well. I have been a positive influence in my society. Yet as great as all those things are, and they should be commended, ultimately everyone agrees that they are not perfect.

The problem is that the Bible teaches in order to be in the presence of a perfect God, you have to be perfect. So while each of us have this desire to be perfect, we are faced with the reality that we do not always follow God. We do not always love people. We do not always use our tongues in a way that builds people up and worships God. We do not always help the poor and afflicted. We do not always download movies legally. We do not always live selflessly.

The situation really is hopeless if it is up to us. If it is up to other religious leaders. However, that is exactly why we call Jesus our Great High Priest, our Great Hope. He says to the Father, "Lord I shall be perfect. I shall exchange my perfect life for them with their imperfect ones. I shall die for their sins." In the end, the only way God accepts this deal is if Jesus is sinless. You see, God must punish sin and he punished Jesus for you. In return, if you trust in Jesus as your only savior, you are imputed with the perfect life of Jesus. You are allowed to enter God's presence. You are allowed access to heaven. What was once impossible is now possible because of Jesus. Because he was sinless. Because he was the perfect High Priest.

5. Jesus made only one sacrifice

Lastly, because Jesus was a perfect, sinless, High Priest he only needed to make one sacrifice. The former priests would have to make ongoing, annual sacrifices for their sins and the sins of the people. Not Jesus. God accepted his perfect sacrifice, once and for all. Just before Jesus died on the cross, he said, "It is finished." As far as God is concerned, the perfect sacrifice already has been accomplished.

Bill Hybels pondered a way that he could communicate the gospel quickly to someone. He came up with the do and done illustration. When asked what is the difference between religion and Christianity, he said, religion is about doing. You strive in life to do the right things before your god and hope that he will accept you in the end. That the good things in life will outweigh the bad ones. On other hand, Hybels said, Christianity is about being done. In other words, when Jesus died on the cross and was raised from the dead, the “do’s” that needed to be done were finished. We rest on Christ’s one sacrifice. We do not have to strive to work out our salvation, it has already been accomplished by Jesus’ work on the cross.

You see, the most amazing story in the world is not that a teenager marries a 108-year-old vampire. It is not that we finally got Osama. The greatest story involves what Jesus accomplished for us on the cross. His lone sacrifice was the key to having the opportunity to receive salvation.

Maybe you have been listening and you recognize that you have been striving to be right with God too long. Maybe you are discouraged because though your intent is good, you still find yourself struggling to live the godly life.

There is good news. You don’t have to strive. You just have to put your trust in the one and only sacrifice of Jesus. Quit trying to be a sacrifice and accept the One sacrifice. Recognize that you do not have to reinvent the wheel. Just trust in Jesus as your great high priest who made the perfect sacrifice on your behalf.