

**Jesus is Greater**  
**Hebrews 7:11-28**

1. King of Peace

2. Prince of Peace

3. Jesus Reigns Forever

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## **Hebrews: Jesus is Greater**

### **Chapter Seven**

#### Intro

Well, I began the last Sunday I preached with a story about preaching behind my wife, April. Unfortunately, I have no anecdotal story about bookending a District Superintendent.

Maybe something will happen this morning, making this moment my anecdotal story for bookending a District Superintendent. The best stories come naturally of course, so if you are planning anything, please don't.

Two Sunday's ago, I also dropped Melchizedek's, promising that we would get to him on this Sunday, provided that you would return. And return you have!

I will hold up my end of the bargain. Before we get into Melchizedek, allow me to read a section of scripture from chapter 7. This is Hebrews 7:11-28 if you have your bible or the bible app, we also have it on the screen for you to follow along.

Hebrews 7:11-28

I've just given away the point the author is trying to make and comparison the author is trying to draw between Jesus and Melchizedek. Before getting to that, the author gives some background to who and what Melchizedek is.

Melchizedek is the King of Peace.

#### **1. King of Peace**

We don't actually know much about Melchizedek. We see Melchizedek mentioned in three books of the Bible: Genesis, Psalms, and in Hebrews. The account in Hebrews provides the most information about Melchizedek, as it gives us a brief summary of what is said in the other two books.

The author of Hebrews tells that Melchizedek is the priest of the Most High God, the God who rules above and beyond all other supposed gods. The Lord of lords has a priest, and that is priest is Melchizedek.

The author also tells us that the name "Melchizedek", "in the first place" the author mentions, means "king of righteousness".

The author then describes the place Melchizedek rules over. "Next", the author states, "he is also the king of Salem", "that is", the author adds, that this king of righteousness was the

king over a small city-state named “Salem”, translated as “peace”, or as we know it better Jerusalem, translated as “foundation of peace”.

I have added very little additional information and even less emphasis. The information, including the translations, and the emphasis is not implied, it is explicitly stated by the author. The author has placed emphasis on different words for us, for a specific reason, which we will get to in a second.

So, putting all of that information and emphasis together, we have before us in this text “King of Righteousness, king and ruler of place known as the “Foundation of Peace”. The full title of Melchizedek.

Verse 4 of this chapter exclaims “See how great he is!” It took a lot of build-up, getting to that exclamation, all of that translating and emphasis, to describe Melchizedek.

In between explaining Melchizedek’s role and translating his name, the author of the letter to the Hebrews describes an interaction between Melchizedek and Abraham.

The author states that it was Melchizedek who blessed Abraham, upon meeting him and that Abraham presented Melchizedek with “one-tenth of everything” or a tithe of all that Abraham had captured from his conquest.

That part is important, and it ties into the author’s last note of this first part of this section. This chapter is entirely focused on the similarities of Melchizedek and Jesus.

And at the end of the first section of getting into that argument, the author notes that Melchizedek’s genealogy and kinship is unknown, that we don’t know where Melchizedek was born, who he was born to, or when he died or who buried him when he died.

In that sense, not knowing how Melchizedek’s life ended, scripturally, Melchizedek does indeed resemble the Son of God, remaining a priest forever more, just as the author claimed.

The second part of this first section, addresses the encounter with Abraham that I mentioned.

The author of Hebrews draws from Genesis chapter 14, tells us that Melchizedek held the title of priest early on, before we see any instruction of how and who becomes a priest, and that Melchizedek blessed Abraham and received a tithe from Abraham.

This is an important note, because, as the author states “It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior.”

The superior priest of the Most High God, king of righteousness who is the king of the foundation of peace, blesses and receives a tithe of from the inferior Abraham, the father of God's people.

Melchizedek was the priest of God Most High, before Abraham became the father of God's people, the patriarch of God's people.

Melchizedek was the priest of the Most High God before Levi, before Levitical law and Levitical order of priests. The priests who would intercede on behalf of the people of Israel and cleanse their sin, came from the line of Levi. But Melchizedek was doing that before Levi was even born, according to our author.

The book of Matthew charts Jesus' genealogy, stemming from David, who was a son of Abraham, but not a son of Levi. That means that according to Levitical Law, Jesus cannot be a priest and cannot intercede on behalf of the people of God or make sacrifices to cleanse them of their sin.

The fact that Jesus does this doesn't make sense to the audience this letter is addressed to, just like how Melchizedek was the priest of the Most High God, as Melchizedek was also not of the Levitical priesthood.

Jesus is not from the line of Levi. The line of Levi was supposed to intercede on behalf of the people of God, but they themselves became tainted with sin and needed to make sacrifices for their own sins.

The author mentions this and asks why another would need to come through the order of Melchizedek, which is citing Psalm 110:4, where David proclaims Jesus as a priest forever, through the order of Melchizedek.

Levitical priests had flaws. They would sin themselves and would have to make sacrifices for their own sins and they also would die off, extending the grace of God for a short period of time.

Melchizedek was the priest before the Levitical priesthood was established, before the regulations for priests were established and before cleansing for priests was needed, and the lack of genealogy makes Melchizedek a priest forever, seemingly without end.

Jesus came the same way, not through the Levitical line of flawed priests, but through the way of Righteous Melchizedek and like Melchizedek, Jesus is a priest forever. Jesus cleanses our sins forever and never needed or needs to cleanse himself.

The author is writing to this group of Hebrew Christians, because there have been rumors of dissention amongst the group. There is some compelling, historical evidence that this group may have experienced persecution because of their conversion to Christianity. The group may have grown weary of waiting for Jesus to return and to take rule of the world.

This group may have taken all that was rising up against them and made the decision to return to their old customs and systems. They traced their genealogy, their heritage and history, and may have come to the conclusion that what was working for their ancestors would work for them.

And it is that point there, that the author steps in. Because their history, their lineage, may have worked for their ancestors, but it was not complete for the rest of the world and it wasn't complete for the Hebrews, now that Jesus had come and fulfilled the prophecy that they were supposed to cling to.

The author recounts Melchizedek, who is outside of the Hebrew's lineage, to point to the one who is greater than Melchizedek, greater than their ancestors, Jesus, who is also outside of their priestly order.

The author gave quite a bit of detail to make that point, which struck me as odd. Verses 1-10 are historically dense, quoting from different areas of the bible and even directly translating. I found all that strange. I was talking with Pastor Jason about this, the first section is almost an exegetical exposition, the author went and did the hard work for me.

The author draws from other passages to explain who Melchizedek is and then even translates.

The translations are the most peculiar part. Both "Melchizedek" and "Jerusalem" are Hebrew words. And to what group of people is this letter addressed to again? That's right, Hebrews.

When I was at Point Loma, I took a class titled "Preaching". I know, fitting, right? My professor was near retirement and was, and still is, a masterful preacher. He had reached a point in his teaching career, when he would cut down his lessons to exactly what we needed to hear. The focus wasn't on theory or the history of preaching, but the heart of it. He hardly ever held back.

I remember one class, he was addressing references in sermons. And to a class, full of pompous students, with plenty to prove, he said "Your congregation doesn't want or need a lesson in Greek. They won't care about the structure of the word or which participle goes where. There is no need to go into it."

He then leaned over the lectern, and said sternly, with squinty eyes, "And if find out that any of you are teaching Greek from the pulpit, I'm going to call you and I'm going politely ask you to stop embarrassing me".

I was reminded of my professors' warning while working through this text. My professors' point makes sense and ties into what I mentioned last time, that the Bible is first and foremost transformative, over informative.

I struggled with why in the world would the author of this letter translated these Hebrew names for this group of Hebrews. The author did it for the same reason that we continue to translate biblical words in sermons today, to draw attention to the meaning behind the words.

These were not just names, but titles of Melchizedek. The author was trying to draw the audiences' attention to someone who came before their ancestors, someone who was greater than Abraham, and then guide them in understanding that someone like Melchizedek needed to come, because their ancestors were not enough and would not be enough to return to.

The priests of God's people were not complete, they constantly needed to offer sacrifice for their own sins, and they eventually did die. Both of those facts were not useful in restoring the relationship between God and humanity, which is why someone else needed to come, according to the order of Melchizedek, someone greater than the ancestors and someone who had no end.

That person was Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

## **2. Prince of Peace**

The second section of scripture in this chapter continues the compassion between Melchizedek and Jesus, but focuses more on Jesus.

The author states that if perfection, for all, not just Israel, were attainable through Levitical priesthood, there would not be a need for another to come.

We know about what the author is talking about, that Jesus came to fulfill the Law and restore the relationship between God and all of humanity.

Remember that this group of converts might be facing persecution for converting to Christianity, and might be considering returning to the practices and beliefs of their ancestors for their salvation.

The author is reminding the Hebrews of the prophecy of Jesus, that another is to come, from a different tribe, a different line.

13 Now the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. 14 For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.

Jesus is from a different tribe than the established order of priests, Jesus did not require a sacrifice for Himself and he is a priest forever.

The evidence stating that Jesus comes from a different tribe is from Psalm 110:4, which says “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

Jesus is different than the priests these Hebrews know, Jesus is greater than any priest they have ever known.

The Levitical priests took their places due to their heritage, but Jesus’ placement and position was spoken into existence by God. Jesus is greater than the priests that came before him.

Through the flaws of the previous priests, it became evident that something more, something different was needed, and Jesus was that something else.

Jesus is the ultimate priest king, superior to any other mediator between God and humans, and Jesus reigns forever.

This fact regarding Jesus is found all over the Bible, one place of instance is in Isaiah 9:6, For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Jesus is the everlasting Prince of Peace. Jesus is the Son of God, the Son of the Most High God, whereas Melchizedek and the priests that followed him, were servants of God. Both held in the Lord’s favor, but each with very different roles and respect. The servant serving a time, but the Son, reigning forever.

### **3. Jesus Reigns Forever**

The last section of this chapter establishes Jesus’ reign forever. The entire chapter has done that really, but this last section adds additional emphasis.

The last section of scripture begins with <sup>18</sup> There is, on the one hand, the abrogation of an earlier commandment because it was weak and ineffectual <sup>19</sup> (for the law made nothing perfect); there is, on the other hand, the introduction of a better hope, through which we approach God.

This commandment that is in need of abolishing is the Levitical priesthood, or the command that priests come through the line of Levi. As the author mentioned before, the priests were flawed, they needed to sacrifice for their own sins and they did eventually die. This, to quote the author, produces weak and ultimately ineffectual priests, because of their own sin and their death prevent sustained, spiritual, perfection and focus on the perfection of the flesh.

Thank God for Jesus though, who brings a new hope, a better hope, a complete way in which we not only approach God, but have a relationship with God, now and forevermore.

The hardest hitting verse from this chapter is verse 25: Consequently he (Jesus) is able for all time to save<sup>[e]</sup> those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

Because Jesus never sinned and he lives forever, Jesus can and does, continuously intercede on the behalf of ALL who approach God, through him, for all, not just the Hebrews, but for humanity as a whole, something the previous priests could not tackle.

This last section ends with a recap of Jesus' supremacy, the fact the he never sinned while the other priests did, and Jesus lives now forever, while the other priests died, but most importantly noting that the other priests were appointed to their position through the law or the order of priesthood, while Jesus was spoken into the position by God.

### Conclusion

Jesus is greater than Abraham, who was the voice of God to the people of God but was still with limitations. Jesus is greater than Melchizedek, who even though was the priest of the most high God before any priestly order was established, was also with limitations.

Jesus is greater than the Hebrew's doubts and worries. Jesus is greater than the voices of those persecuting the Hebrews. Jesus is greater than the Hebrews rituals and ancestors.

Jesus is without sin, Jesus is without death, Jesus is without limits. Jesus is greater.