

Hebrews



**Promises
Faithfully
Kept**

Hebrews 7.1-19 (CSB)

God's Planned Priesthood

When I begin to speak every Sunday, I have certain presuppositions given to me by Scripture. One of the starting points I have is knowing that you are made for relationship with God and that you long for such a relationship.

We are made for relationship. Pediatricians encourage skin to skin contact with newborns because that is relationship and bonding to them. They are near to you, taking in your smell, your touch, your warmth. They hear your voice more closely as they lay on your chest. We are made for nearness and relationship.

We are made for nearness and relationship with God. God himself is the One who initiates these relationships. He wants relationship with us.

The church exists because God has called us into salvation by faith in Christ.

We can and should have a relationship with God, but...

The relationship is different than any other relationship. It is better, deeper, higher, purer and more essential than any other relationship you have ever had. The relationship is also on God's terms, not ours.

That lesson has been hard learned by people throughout the ages. Ever since Adam and Eve, people have been seeking what can only come from relating to God as God BUT we have sought that relationship through the creation rather than with the Creator.

When God led the Israelites out of Egypt, He led them to Mt. Sinai. God was going to speak to Moses and all the people. But the people said no. Because of their fear, they refused to hear the voice of God. They needed a mediator, and so Moses and Aaron acted as mediator between God and the people.

God had planned for there to be a mediator between Himself and His people after the fall. That mediator would be our high priest.

Aaron was the high priest and a continuous line of men from his direct descent would serve in that role. The Levites were to fill the rest of the priestly roles. The people left Sinai with a covenant that dictated that they could not come near to God and that these Levitical priests would offer temporary sacrifices while the people kept their distance.

But then David wrote Psalm 110. In it he declared that there was another priest, one who was priest according to the pattern of Melchizedek, who also happens to be the Lord himself.

And today the author of Hebrews, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, tells us that should shape and change everything about how people try to relate to God. Instead of

distance, we get nearness. Instead of laws, we get love. Instead of keeping track of our sins, we rest in God's promises. The agent of Creation Himself creates the new way to God, the way planned out from even before Abraham.

7:1 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of God Most High, met Abraham and blessed him as he returned from defeating the kings,

2 and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name means king of righteousness, then also, king of Salem, meaning king of peace.

**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.**

4 Now consider how great this man was: even Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth of the plunder to him.

5 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.

**6 But one without this lineage
collected a tenth from Abraham
and blessed the one who had
the promises.**

7 Without a doubt, the inferior is blessed by the superior. 8 In the one case, men who will die receive a tenth, but in the other case, Scripture testifies that he lives.

9 And in a sense Levi himself, who receives a tenth, has paid a tenth through Abraham, 10 for he was still within his ancestor when Melchizedek met him.

**11 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?**

**12 For when there is a change
of the priesthood, there must be
a change of law as well.**

**13 For the one these things are
spoken about belonged to a
different tribe. No one from it
has served at the altar.**

14 Now it is evident that our Lord came from Judah, and Moses said nothing about that tribe concerning priests.

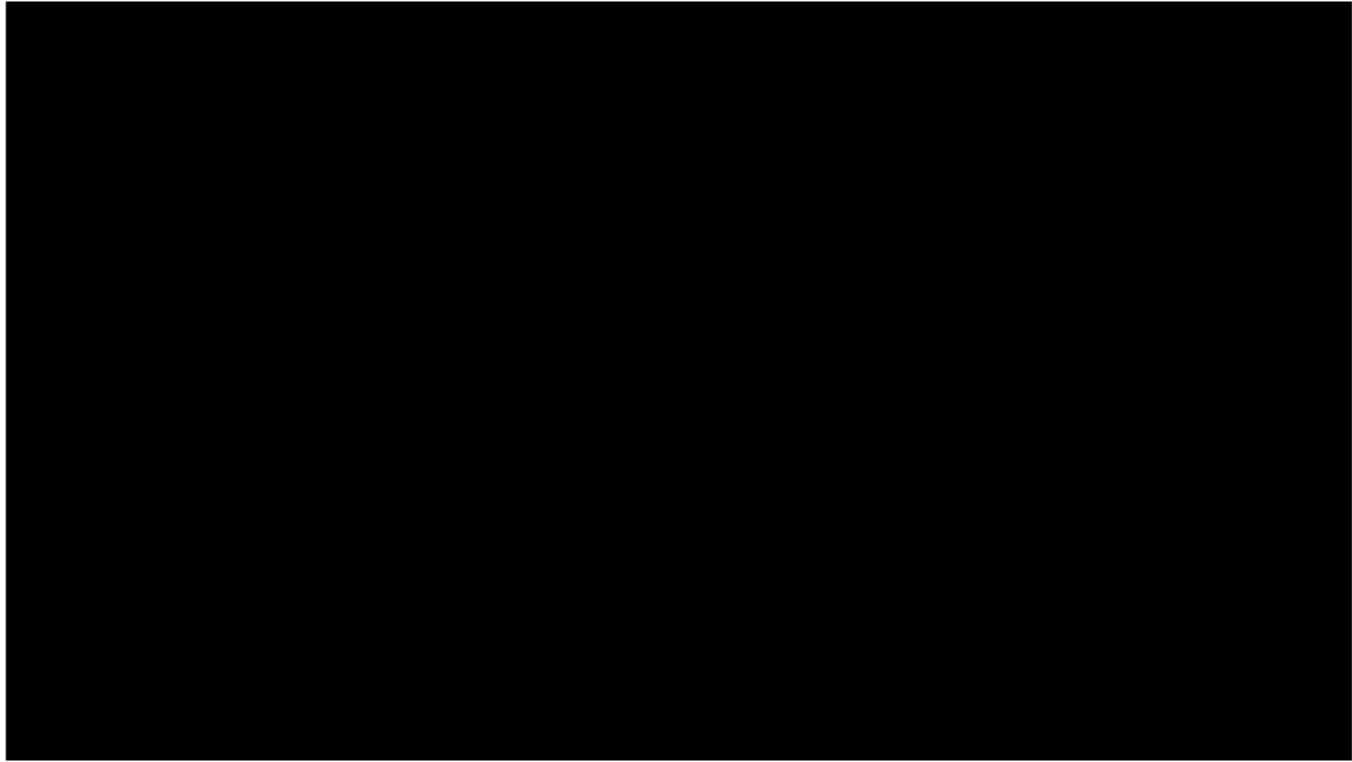
**15 And this becomes clearer if
another priest like Melchizedek
appears,**

**16 who did not become a priest
based on a legal regulation
about physical descent but
based on the power of an
indestructible life.**

**17 For it has been testified:
You are a priest forever
according to the order of
Melchizedek.**

**18 So the previous command is
annulled because it was weak
and unprofitable**

19 (for the law perfected nothing), but a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.



Pray



(Adult water wing floaties pic)

Before we get into the details of our text and how Melchizedek helps point us to Jesus, let me remind you what was said just prior to this text. From the end of chap. 5 through chap. 6, the author stops his flow of thought and says, “Put on your adult clothes, sit down at the adult table, and get ready to have adult discussion as a Christian.” Hebrews 7 communicates the gospel with biblical depth. You can only appreciate what the author is saying if you are willing to dig into Scripture beyond checking the daily box. You do not want to accept laziness. The people at Sinai refused to be near to God. The people of Christ are those who draw near. If you are to draw nearer and nearer to God, you must go into deep waters after a while.

So, don’t tune me out today because you say I get too deep. The author of Hebrews has already warned us. Don’t be okay with being a grown man that has to keep wearing floaties on his arms. If that is where you are at today, fine. But don’t stay there. You’re missing out on relating to our God and His plans.

We need to line up with God's consistent character and plan.

1) We need to line up with God's consistent character and plan.

I believe some of you who are students in here are preparing for end of semester exams, correct? One of the classes you may be taking an exam for is history. The Hebrew Christians that were receiving this letter were not remembering everything about their history lessons. When it comes to test time, do you ever feel like you may not know something on your test? Sometimes it is because you haven't studied the materials. Sometimes you have faced some stressful situations that are distracting you.

For the original audience, it appeared to be a combination of both when it came to knowing and applying history.

They had the answer right that they are to have a relationship with God. They even had come into saving faith in Christ.

But they were experiencing stress from people who did not like that they were now Christians. So when they sat down at the test of life, they looked at the question of By what mediator can one properly relate to God? They saw only one blank to fill in their answer, but they started wondering if the answer should be multiple choice: Jesus or the Levitical Priesthood?

[Show slides of drawing]

The author of Hebrews then is like a teacher who interrupts the test and says, "Don't you remember reading about Melchizedek? If so, then doesn't knowing about Melchizedek answer all your questions?"

Apparently not, so let's go through some details about Melchizedek so we can point out how God the Son was always the priest planned to represent us to God and to impart life and salvation to us.

Abram had gone out to fight against several kings who had fought against several other kings. The kings from group A stole people and goods from group B. Abram went out to fight after that because Lot, his nephew, had been one of the people captured.

Abram shows up with his men and win the day.

On his way back home, he meets a guy named Melchizedek. Within the narrative of Genesis, Melchizedek only shows up for three verses.

18 Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine; he was a priest to God Most High. 19 He blessed him and said:

Abram is blessed by God Most High,
Creator of heaven and earth,
20 and blessed be God Most High
who has handed over your enemies to you.
And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

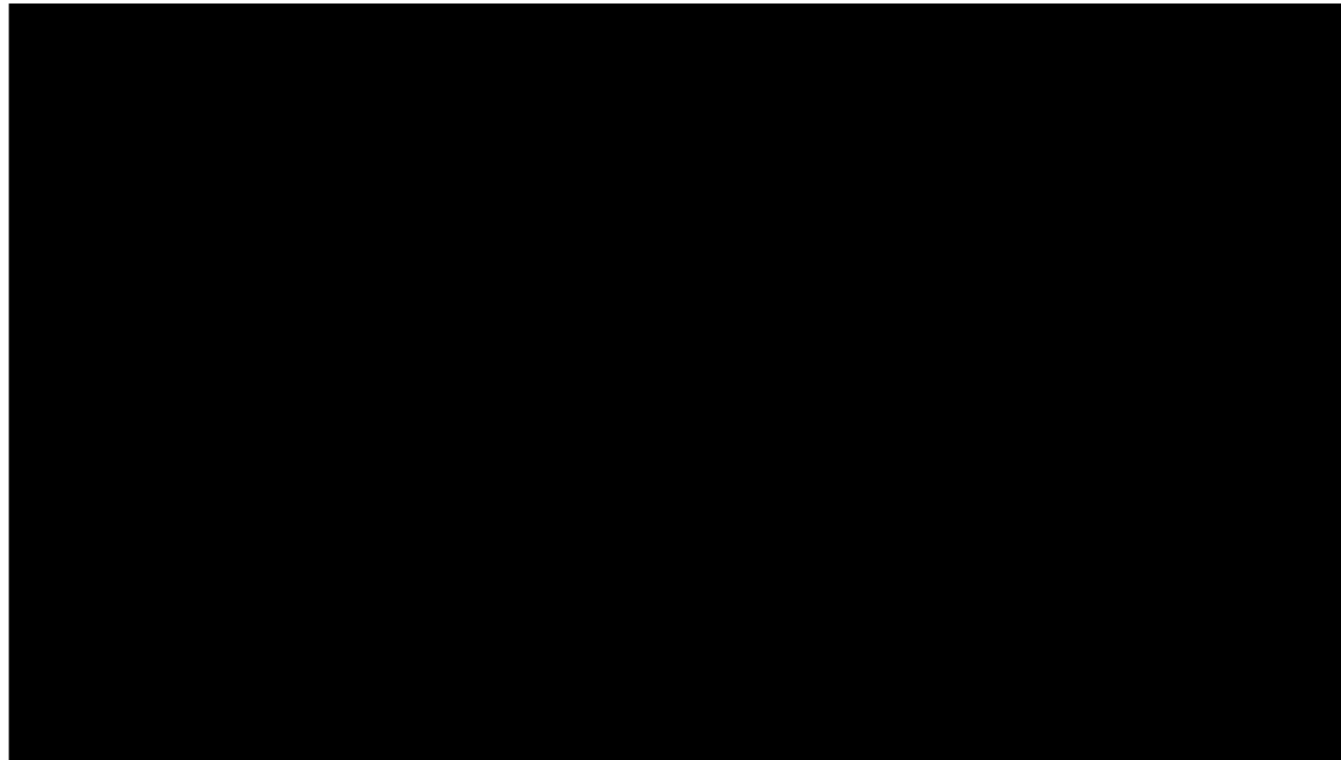
The author of Hebrews uses these three verses and what is said in Psalm 110:4 to tell them the Son of God was always intended to be our High Priest forever.



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**God's plan A has always been
for the Son to be our King and
Priest. There is no plan B.**

2) God's plan A has always been for the Son to be our King and Priest. There is no plan B.

The author points out some things about Melchizedek that help us better understand God the Son who would take up his priestly ministry through the Incarnation. I'm about to list the points the author makes about Melchizedek that help us understand the Son. Before I do, I need you to understand the difference between Melchizedek and the Son as the author references each.

What he says about Melchizedek he is saying these things are true literarily, not literally but literarily. What he says about God the Son he says theologically.

So here's the key: If you can accept these points about Melchizedek literarily, you can accept them about Christ literally.

- **King of Righteousness (mlk + zdk)**
- **King of Peace (Salem translates to peace)**
- **Priest of God Most High**
- **Without father and mother (in the sense of being created by others)**

- King of Righteousness (mlk + zdk)

The name Melchizadek literally translates to King of Righteousness. The mortal man Melchizadek had actual parents in the background we don't get to read. They named him how some people name their children according to royal names or religious terms. I grew up with a girl named after Queen Esther. Her name literally was Queen Esther. You, son, will be known as the King of Righteousness, even before those parents knew how he might live.

He was given that name and was recognized as righteous by Abram. Job was a righteous man long ago. He was recognized as such by not only people around him but by even the angels of heaven and even by fallen angels like Satan.

But you know, there is greater King of Righteousness, God Himself. He is in every way right and good. We would be foolish to try to hold a standard up to Him, for He is the One who establishes standards according to His character.

The Lord—the Lord is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love and truth, 7 maintaining faithful love to a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity, rebellion, and sin. But he will not leave the guilty unpunished, bringing the consequences of the fathers' iniquity on the children and grandchildren to the third and fourth generation. (Exodus 34:6-7)

the ordinances of the Lord are reliable
and altogether righteous (Ps. 19:9)

8 There is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me, but to all those who have loved

his appearing. (2 Tim. 4:8)

The Lord God is righteous and reigns with His righteousness as His scepter. Jesus is Lord. And His reign ushers in peace.

- King of Peace (Salem translates to peace)

We long for right relationship with God, but we also long for Him to set everything right according to His design in perfect peace. In most of his letters, Paul starts off with a greeting that includes “grace and peace to you.” It is not just a kind platitude. From God our Father and the Lord Jesus, we receive grace, which brings us peace and ushers us into the inaugurated kingdom of peace.

Jesus is our prince of peace, whose death and resurrection enters us into the restored creation, which is now in part but not yet in fullness.

It is pointed out in this passage that as the Son took on Incarnation, he became part of the lineage of Judah. This is what was prophesied about Judah’s royal descendant.

The scepter will not depart from Judah
or the staff from between his feet
until he whose right it is comes
and the obedience of the peoples belongs to him.

11 He ties his donkey to a vine,
and the colt of his donkey to the choice vine.

He washes his clothes in wine
and his robes in the blood of grapes.

Shalom, or peace, is not just an ending of internal or interpersonal strife. It is a return to the creation order’s intended flourishing, without thorn or thistle or suffering getting in the way, so that wine, gold, precious jewels are treated as common and abundantly present.

The people who find their rest in Christ Jesus will have a more luxurious home than Melchizadek or any other king could ever provide for his people.

- Priest of God Most High

This is one of the strangest aspects to Melchizadek’s identity. Throughout Genesis we are presented with a consistent but developing pattern. God walks closely with someone. After that person’s obedience wanes or passes off of the scene, we are exposed again to the terrible sinfulness of mankind. As one author referenced about this pattern, Scripture and history do not support the evolution of man, rather they speak to the devolution of man, a downward spiral into sin. But then God uses a man by whom He will draw people to Himself. He promises to bring about blessing to the world by means of this man’s faithfulness and his faithful lineage. From Adam to Seth and to Noah and then in a crescendo to Abraham. The author of Hebrews highlights the greatness of Abraham in v. 4. The term patriarch in the original writing is reserved for the end of the sentence, like an interjection that he just yells out. We’re talking about Abraham, THE patriarch. And in walks Melchizadek, this rare exception that throws this building pattern for a loop. There is ANOTHER man at the time of Abraham who worships and serves the ONE TRUE God. In a land and time in which people worshipped multiple gods who were grouped into a hierarchy, there was no single MOST HIGH God among the peoples, not in the sense of being in a category of Godness all to Himself.

There was another priest who existed prior to Melchizadek, prior to Abraham, prior to Noah, prior to Adam, even. He is the mediating Agent by whom all of creation was made. He is the Son begotten not made, who is very God of very God.

- Without father and mother (in the sense of being created by others)

You may be thinking, “But what about the Virgin Mary?” Is Jesus motherless, then? God the Son did not have a mother to birth him into existence, though in His incarnation he took on humanity, being conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary. The author is highlighting both the full humanity of Christ and the full deity of Christ. The Son of God existed prior to taking on the name Jesus. He was not man until the Incarnation but has ever since been fully God and fully man, with what theologians refer to as the hypostatic union. The church clarified over the next several centuries what the author of Hebrews already was communicating. As soon as He took on humanity, the Son was fully God and fully man as one person. Two full natures as one person. He was not created. His humanity was not swallowed up by his deity. He is not a machine with two different engines. He is fully God and fully man and alone is our mediator between God and man.

- **Without genealogy (without beginning or end)**
- **Priest forever**
- **Greater than Abraham (and Levi)**
- **Priesthood is prior to and overturns the Levitical priesthood**

- King of Righteousness (mlk + zdk)
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- Without genealogy (without beginning or end)

This is not just a repetition of the previous point about being without father or mother.

Melchizadek shows up without any introductions. If you have ever read through 1 Chronicles, you know genealogies were a big part of Israelite history. Can you trace your lineage? But Melchizadek shows up without any such announcement and leaves, again without any announcement.

This reference to lineage for Melchizadek is especially related to his role as priest. In Numbers 8 we find that Levitical priests could only serve between the ages of 25 and 50. They had to inherit the right to serve and then pass their job responsibilities onto someone else when they aged out. Who did Melchizadek inherit this role from? From no one, literally speaking. Who inherited his role as priest afterward? No one, literally speaking. His birth is not mentioned. His death is not recorded. His predecessor is not mentioned, and he has no heir to take over when he gets too old.

- Priest forever

All that to say that Jesus is our priest forever. Just as Melchizadek literally does not lose his priesthood, Jesus literally will be priest forever, mediating between God and His faithful people. We're talking about an essentially different life than how people have experienced it on this earth. The resurrected Jesus will never get sick. He'll never

age. He'll never die. People can try to make themselves look young or healthy on the outside, especially if they have a lot of money. I remember seeing a side-by-side comparison of Tom Brady as an incoming rookie vs. him after winning 6 Super Bowls. The meme said, "See, you're not ugly, you're just poor." We can pay to have people design our diets for us, cook our food, style our hair, design our clothes for us, but none of those things can impart eternal life. They only clean up the outside of the aging and atrophying bodies that we have. But as priest forever Jesus gives eternal hope and life.

- Greater than Abraham (and Levi)

The author points out that Abraham recognized Melchizedek as being greater than himself. There were two actions that took place in Genesis 14 that the author of Hebrews leans on for his argument. First, Abraham gave the very best 10% of the plunder from war to Melchizedek. The reference to plunder is not just a random 10%. The wording there depicts Abraham's offering as coming from the cream of the crop, from the very best of what was retrieved from war. This giving of the best 10% occurs before there was any Law commanding tithing. Abraham's gift was prior to prophetic corrections for giving blemished animals. He gave according to the pattern of one who knows and trusts God. We are to give back to God what He has given us, and we should give our first and best. By giving Melchizedek this top 10%, he was acknowledging that Melchizedek was God's priest.

And that offering set up for Melchizedek to bless Abraham. Abram was the one to whom God gave the promise that he would bless all nations. The one who blesses is greater than the one who is blessed. A father is not to expect his children to pronounce blessings upon him. Rather, he is the one who is to bless them. CEOs don't step out of the way for a new intern to pass by. No, it is the other way around. The one who blesses is clearly the greater one. So Melchizedek is greater even than Abraham. No Israelite would dare declare himself to be greater than Abraham; that would be like a single leaf on a giant oak saying it is greater than the acorn from which it originated.

If something were to have happened to one of your direct ancestors before he or she had children, the you, in all your wonderful details, would never have existed. Like it or not, the life and experiences of your ancestors are part of your story. Levi's great grandfather Abraham implicitly acknowledged on behalf of all that would come after him that there was one greater than him, who was priest of God Most High.

But that apparently got Abraham's attention. Abraham longed to see the day that the Messiah would come, and Jesus himself said that before Abraham even existed, "I Am."

It is not just that the Son existed prior to Abraham, He is God over Abraham.

To whom are you looking for your identity? Jewish people are able to trace their direct lineage all the way back to Abraham. But he showed in Genesis 14 that God's promised and planned priest was greater, and Christ Jesus is supposed to provide our identity to us. He is the One who comes from Abraham but whom Abraham acknowledges to be greater than himself. To whom or what are you looking for blessing and peace? Only Christ can bless you in that ultimate way that brings you before God Himself.

Finally,

- His priesthood is prior to and overturns the Levitical priesthood

Psalms 110:4 was written prior to the birth of Jesus. It was written while the Temple system was still alive and functioning at full force. But David tells us there is a priesthood that belongs to the second person of the Trinity that the Levitical priesthood is unable to fulfill. According to our author, to pronounce the existence of another priesthood is to nullify the existence of the current priesthood. So even while the blood of bulls and goats was still being spilled not far away in Jerusalem, David pens the words that foretells of a different way of relating to God, one that follows along the lines of how Abraham relates to Melchizedek. The OT elsewhere teaches us that the sacrificial system does not have the power within itself to cleanse and make whole, which only God has the power to do. If you desired sacrifices O God, I would make them. But what does God desire? A broken and contrite heart. He desires mercy, not sacrificial animals.

The Levitical priesthood, like the Law, was temporary and intended to reveal your insufficiency and your separation from God. Even when things were right in the sense that you were not to be judged, people were at least ceremonially separated from God.

But now Christ has come and has torn the Temple curtain in two. He has opened the way for you to be with God without hindrance. And so the old way of coming to God by means of the temple system has been made obsolete. To go back is to go against God.

Some of you in here are tempted to retreat, to go back to things that once made you feel happy, at least for a little bit. For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. (1 Pet. 4:3)

Don't go back to your old life, from the very thing that you have praised God for delivering you from.

The ministry of dead men is death. For someone to attempt to go back to meet with a Levitical priest at the temple, he would first have to go meet that Levitical priest

where he is, which is in the grave.

But we have available who is alive, alive forever more, who has made a way for us to relate to God based on grace through faith, who stands always ready to show up in your life to pronounce God's blessing upon you...if you will only look to Him.

