

HEBREWS BIBLE STUDY #4

Hebrews 7:17-28 NIV

INTRODUCE: Background Notes

In the Old Testament, God rescued his people from slavery in Egypt and gave them “the law” as a way of helping them know how to live within the relationship God had made with them. The law included what we know of as the Ten Commandments, but it also included all of the first five books of the Old Testament, which the Jewish community calls the Torah.

The law was a beautiful bond between God and the people, but it functioned in some ways like a magnifying glass, able to point out all the ways the people were failing to obey but unable to help them succeed. Included in the law was God’s plan for priests (descendents of Aaron, the brother of Moses) to offer sacrifices that made up for when people disobeyed the law, but the system was always imperfect and incomplete. There was so much sin that multiple generations of priests were needed, and even the priests themselves were unable to obey the law. So, how could this system ever bring true freedom from sin? Answer: It could not.

Now as we pick up our study in Hebrews chapter 7, we see an ancient figure enter the scene. This figure came long before Moses, and he is shrouded in mystery. He was greater than even Abraham, the father of God’s people, because when Abraham met him, he served him. This person is known as Melchizedek. Much later, long after Abraham and Moses, King David spoke (in Psalm 110) about a day in the future when a king would come who is a descendant of David as well as a priest from the order of Melchizedek. This would be a unique and different priesthood, one that would be perfectly designed by God and would last forever.

The author of Hebrews claims that Jesus is the “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” (7:16). Jesus is the perfect and eternal mediator, the one who goes to God on our behalf.



High priest job description:

- Mediator between God and his people
- Hereditary office appointed by lot
- Enters the Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies) every year on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, to burn incense and sprinkle sacrificed animal blood to make up for his own sin and the sin of the people
- Oversees the daily ritual sacrifice of animals for the sin of the people
- CFO of Temple finances and COO of Temple administration
- Recognized as a political head of the nation of Israel
- Not required to swear an oath for office

SEE

Let's look closely at the passage and note characters, relationships, locations, time, actions, repeated words, comparisons, contrasts, cause and effect, etc. Make sections and label them. Share aloud as you bold/italicize/underline/highlight on the text.

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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.’”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.

DISCUSS

Let’s get curious and ask questions that will help us discuss what the author wanted the original readers to understand. Good questions come from key observations. Ask your questions, and the leader will post them as comments on the text. Then we’ll answer our questions and the two questions below.

1. Look up Psalm 110. How does the author of Hebrews use Psalm 110:4 in verse 21 to make the case for Jesus being the superior high priest?
2. In the uncertain times they were facing, the readers of Hebrews were tempted to return to old, familiar paradigms of faith -- that their faith must follow someone born from a certain family, tied to a certain location and political affiliation, wearing specific clothing, etc. How did Jesus upend their expectations of what the promised Savior would be like? Why do you think the author is presenting Jesus in this way?

Central Truth (work together to write one short sentence that captures the big idea of the passage)

APPLY

1. Spiritual Invitation: What is God saying to you through this passage?

Unlike human priests, Jesus, as both Son of God and fully human, has resurrected from the dead and has become the perfect sacrifice for sin, once for all. "Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them" (7:25).

Like those who received this letter, we are also tempted to seek other ways of being healed from brokenness or rescued from sin. We might rely on a relationship or performing well in classes, sports, or music. Some of us believe more money will rescue us, like buying the right stuff so we can look and act like the people around us who hold power. As we follow Jesus, we might still be relying on other people and things to rescue us and protect us.

In your life, where do you need Jesus to save you completely? Bring this to Jesus and ask him to show you how he is better than any other person or thing you can rely on.

2. Missional Opportunity: What action can you take this week in response?

Jesus is interceding for believers who are struggling with the temptation to deny their faith because they are under persecution. With your group now, join Jesus in praying for strength, hope, and wisdom for our brothers and sisters around the world.

- To pray for Christian university students in the Middle East and North Africa: <https://ifesworld.org/en/region/mena> (scroll to bottom)
- To pray for Christian university students in east Asia: <https://ifesworld.org/en/region/eastasia/> (scroll to bottom)

Name	Spiritual Invitation	Missional Opportunity
