

Week 31
Hebrews 4-8

Theme: Jesus the high priest.

Conversation Starter

What action option did you choose to do after our discussion last week? What went well? What did not go well?

What questions do you have from the reading this week?

Weekly Review/Intro

Our reading this week continued in the book of Hebrews. This section focused on the idea of rest in God and on Jesus' priesthood. Since these chapters heavily focus on his priesthood, we will dig into that idea. To do this, we need to talk about Jewish history and religious practices.

What was the role of the high priest in Jewish religious practices?

How did someone become the high priest?

Read Hebrews 5:1-7

These verses give a brief overview of the high priest's role and selection. Let's first talk about their role.

Based on these verses, what job did the high priest have?

These verses give us three major roles of the high priest:

- 1) Deals with matters pertaining to God.
- 2) He presents offerings and sacrifices to God.
- 3) He helps deal gently with those lead astray.

One major role not mentioned is that the high priest was the only person permitted to enter the Holy of Holies before God and make a sacrifice for the people of Israel on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16).

What was the purpose of sacrifices in the Old Testament?

Why was there a "Day of Atonement"?

There were many purposes for sacrifices. One reason for sacrifices was to give praise to God for what he has done. The main reason was for the atonement of sins and the cleansing of the people.

Based on these verses, how was the high priest chosen?

The high priest was chosen by God. The first was Aaron, Moses' brother, and the role was passed down his family line. At different times in history, high priests were chosen by the king (Solomon chose one in 1 Kings 2:35).

Based on verses 5-7, how was Jesus similar to the high priest?

Jesus was similar to the high priest because God chose him to do this role. In the same way, Jesus fulfilled the same roles as the high priest while here on Earth.

Read Hebrews 5:7-10

How did Jesus fulfill the four roles we mentioned while on Earth?

- 1) **How did Jesus deal with matters pertaining to God?**
- 2) **How did Jesus present a sacrifice to God?**
- 3) **How did Jesus deal gently with those who are astray?**
- 4) **How did Jesus fulfill the Day of Atonement?**

Jesus fulfilled all of his roles to perfection.

- 1) Jesus spent time teaching the people about matters pertaining to God.
- 2) Jesus presented himself as the sacrifice to God for our sins.
- 3) Jesus does this daily by calling us to himself.
- 4) Jesus cleansed the people once and for all by his blood.

Application

In reading about Jesus' priesthood, we see that Jesus is a part of the Order of Melchizedek. We are going to unpack this idea and how it relates to our lives.

Have you ever heard of Melchizedek prior to reading these chapters?

Who was he and why was he important?

Melchizedek, the person, is only in a few verses in Genesis 14 when Abraham was still Abram. However, he is also referenced in the book of Psalms and Hebrews. In Genesis, Melchizedek was a king and a priest of God. In Genesis 13, Abraham's nephew Lot was captured by invading kings, so Abraham took his men and defeated the kings. While coming back from victory with

the spoils, Abraham spoke with the king of Sodom and Melchizedek, king of Salem (Jerusalem). In two verses, Melchizedek blessed Abraham.

Read Genesis 14:19-20

What do you notice about Melchizedek's blessing to Abraham?

Who did Melchizedek give glory for Abraham's victory?

Even though Melchizedek's was very short, his blessing said three big things:

- 1) God blessed Abraham.
- 2) God was the creator of the universe.
- 3) God was the one who gave Abraham victory.

After Melchizedek blessed Abraham, Abraham gave him a tenth of the spoils of his victory (Gen. 14:20).

What is significant about Abraham giving a tenth of the plunder to Melchizedek?

What other act involves giving God a tenth?

Abraham giving a tenth of what he plundered was significant because it showed how he acknowledged the authority of Melchizedek as a priest of God and it was an act of praise by Abraham to God.

Now that we have discussed Melchizedek, let's look at why this short story is significant. Hebrews 7 specifically talks about this short event in the Old Testament and draws parallels between Melchizedek and Jesus.

Read Hebrews 7:1-10

What is the significance of Melchizedek's name?

Melchizedek is an important figure because of what he represents. "First, his name means king of righteousness." Second, his title means king of peace.

Do these names sound familiar to anyone else in the Bible?

What is the author saying about Melchizedek in this section? According to these verses, why is he such an important person?

Verses 4-10 really focus on the historical importance of Melchizedek. In short, since Abraham acknowledged his significance, Melchizedek is therefore significant over ALL of Abraham's descendents. The order of Melchizedek is therefore higher than the tribe of Levi which was appointed by God to be priests for his people.

Based on past lessons, who are the children of the promise of Abraham? Are these just blood relatives? (see Romans 4:9-12)

Why is it important that the order of Melchizedek is higher than the priest of Levi?

Back in Romans 4, we saw that Abraham was the father of those who have faith in God (Christians). This means that the order of Melchizedek is superior to all of Abraham's descendents including us. This is why it is important that the order of Melchizedek is higher than the priests of Levi.

The next section we are going to read is the climax of the author's discussion about Melchizedek and it explains why the order of Melchizedek is important.

Read Hebrews 7:15-22

Based on verse 12, why is the change of priestly order important?

Based on verse 18, what happened to the old command? What command is he talking about?

Based on verse 19, what has been introduced instead of this old command?

As we said a minute ago, this is the climax of the argument. Because Jesus has been appointed to the order of Melchizedek, there is now a changing of the law. The law refers to the old covenant outlined in the Old Testament. As we have seen many times over, the old law does not give us life. Since Jesus was from the tribe of Judah (v. 7:14), he could not be appointed a priest by the old covenant. Therefore, he is the promise of a better covenant (v. 7:22) because the law had to change.

Read Hebrews 7:23-28

What is the new covenant that we now have in Christ? Why is this covenant important? (see v. 7:25)

What is significant about verse 25? What does that mean to us?

Verse 25 is an amazing verse. It clearly says that Jesus is the permanent method of salvation to all who have hope in Him. Jesus is not the permanent fixture of how everyone will receive salvation.

Why is it significant that we now have Jesus as our high priest forever?

What does this mean about our salvation?

Jesus becoming our high priest forever does two big things. One: it means that he has now sealed how we are saved forever. Two: it means that we have him as our mediator between us and God forever.

Have you ever felt afraid or ashamed to go to God?

Why should having Jesus as our high priest help us approach God?

Hebrews 4:16 says “Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need.” Jesus is there to help us go to God. A priest serves the role as a go-between and intercedes for people. Jesus is there to help you go to God with whatever you are facing and whatever you are going through. Have boldness this week and approach him.

Week 31
Reflection

During this week, you are being charged with answering these questions about yourself and your walk with God. Hopefully these will force you to pray and consider what God wants you to do in your life.

- 1) Do you think other Old Testament figures point to Jesus? If so, who and how?
- 2) Do you regularly go to God with your troubles?
- 3) Are you afraid to go to God? Why is that?
- 4) Have you ever placed your hope in Jesus? Why not?

Week 31
Action

Choose one of the following actions to do as part of your walk this week.

- 1) Read Leviticus 16. Reflect on this chapter. What do you think about the old process of atonement?
- 2) Go to a trusted believer and talk about a time in your life that you were or are afraid to go to God. Pray together and approach God boldly.
- 3) Share the Gospel with someone this week. Tell them about how Jesus is now the permanent way to salvation.