

Studies in Hebrews



Lesson X

Text: Heb. 6:19-7:28

^{6:19} We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain,²⁰ where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

^{7:1} This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him,² and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name means "king of righteousness"; then also, "king of Salem" means "king of peace."³ Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever.

⁴ Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder!⁵ Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people—that is, their brothers—even though their brothers are descended from Abraham.⁶ This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises.⁷ And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater.⁸ In the one case, the tenth is collected by men who die; but in the other case, by him who is declared to be living.⁹ One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham,¹⁰ because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor.

¹¹ If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come—one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron?¹² For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law.¹³ He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar.¹⁴ For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.¹⁵ And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears,¹⁶ 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.¹⁷ For it is declared: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."^[a]

¹⁸ The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless¹⁹ (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.'"^[b]²² Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee 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.

²⁵Therefore he is able to save completely^[c] those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

²⁶Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. ²⁷Unlike 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. ²⁸For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

Footnotes: a. Psalm 110:4; b. or forever; c. Psalm 110:4

Questions for Group Discussion

1. What does “the inner sanctuary behind the curtain” refer to? (6:19)
2. Let’s assemble the facts about Melchizedek, based upon a reading of verses 1-10.
3. Some see the mysterious Melchizedek as an early appearance of Christ (a phenomenon theologians have labeled *theophany*, “appearance of God”). What evidence do we have for and against this, based on the passage we have just read?
4. What was the significance of giving a “tenth” (also known as *tithing*)? (vv 4-10; cf.
5. What case does the writer of Hebrews make for there being “a change of law”? (vs. 12; cf. vv. 11-12) What law was changed and why? (vv 18-22)
6. From a Semitic perspective, how can Jesus be considered a successor to the priesthood even though he descended from the tribe of kings (Judah) not the tribe of priests (Levi)? (vv. 13-17)
7. Identify the key differences between Jesus Christ and the priests and high priests (“chief priests”) of the Old Covenant. (vv. 23-28)
8. What is Jesus able to do that no one else can? (vv. 25, 27)