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THE LOOKOUT

OCTOBER 2021

Unit: HEBREWS (Part 2)

Theme: HIGH PRIEST

Overview: Sooner or later in life we need someone to represent us. When purchasing a home, we might need a Realtor. When executing a will, we might need a lawyer. When making arrangements for a funeral, we might need a funeral director. The Bible calls the representative between God and people a priest. In this unit students will learn of the character, calling, office, covenant, and sacrifice of Jesus our high priest.

HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.

Tabs indicate the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.

Use the **Discovery** questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

WEEK OF OCTOBER 17, 2021

LESSON AIM: Worship in awe of the depth of God's will and foreknowledge as seen in the connection between the priesthood of Jesus and Melchizedek.

UNIT: Hebrews (Part 2)

THEME: High Priest

LESSON TEXT: Hebrews 7:11-28

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Genesis 14:17-20; Hebrews 7:1-10

HIGH PRIEST IN THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK

BY MARK SCOTT

There are many major and minor characters in a narrative as large as the Bible. But some of the people are just, well, a bit weird. They “take stage” briefly, allow their little story to contribute to God’s big story, and then disappear. For instance, what about the witch at Endor (1 Samuel 28)? She was not even supposed to exist (28:9), but she showed up to pronounce the last sentence on Saul’s ruined kingship. Weird. Or, what about Samson? Very few good things are said about this playboy judge. But four chapters of the Bible are devoted to him (Judges 13-16), he judged Israel for 20 years, and his name is found in Hebrews 11 as a hero of the faith. Weird. Or what about Melchizedek, that strange priestly king who met up with Abraham following the battle of the kings (Genesis 14:17-24)? That was a weird gathering.

But Melchizedek mattered in the Hebrews writer’s argument about Jesus’ priestly kingship. Jesus was designated by God as a merciful and faithful high priest. But as the writer moved his argument along about Jesus’ priesthood and New Covenant, Melchizedek became the perfect type of Christ in the Old Testament to connect some interpretative dots between Jesus and his non-Aaronic tribe.

Different Tribe*Hebrews 7:11-16*

The Levitical tribe was the priestly tribe. Aaron and Moses belonged to that one. The law, the sacrifices, and the dietary code were all part of the Levitical covenant. If the Messiah figure was to be a priest, one would assume he would come from Aaron’s line. But Jesus was like Melchizedek—different indeed. The writer had much to say about this change of covenant (Hebrews 8–10), so it was vital to deal with Jesus’ tribe as a possible “push back” to his legitimate priesthood.

Perfection (mentioned three times in this text) for God’s people was possible only if the law was kept perfectly. That at least meant that Levitical priests were the only ones who could serve at the altar. When certain kings took it upon themselves to function as priests, it did not end well (e.g., 1 Samuel 13:8-15). So how could Jesus, from the tribe of Judah, serve as a priest? Answer: Melchizedek. This strange “seeming outsider” was actually an insider in God’s program of redemption. Very little is known about him; we don’t know his origin or demise (Hebrews 7:3). But he appeared on the scene, blessed

Abraham, and had an *indestructible life*. Sounds a bit like Jesus—i.e., he came, ministered, and ascended. Wrong tribe but right Savior.

Better Hope*Hebrews 7:17-22*

The Hebrews writer placed the often-quoted Psalm 110 at the heart of his argument. Jesus’ priesthood would be like Melchizedek’s. It would be different but everlasting. The Levitical covenant would be set aside (or fulfilled, cf. Matthew 5:17-20) in the coming of one like Melchizedek. The Levitical covenant was *weak and useless* (without profit). It could not fix the problem; it could only reveal the problem.

The *better hope* that came through Christ would allow the worshipper to *draw near to God*. The Levitical covenant was about fear, darkness, and distance. Nonetheless, the New Covenant ushered in through one like Melchizedek was, like the covenant before it, brought in by a promise from God called an *oath*. The oath (the sure word of God) was evident in Psalm 110. God had sworn and would not change his mind that Jesus would be a priest-king *forever*. Jesus himself became the *guarantor* (the only time this specific word appears in the New Testament) that the New Covenant would surpass the Old Covenant.

Permanent Priesthood*Hebrews 7:23-28*

Every priest was terminal. In contrast, Jesus, like Melchizedek, had an indestructible life. Jesus *lives forever*. Therefore, his priesthood continues. Jesus can save *completely* (or as the *King James Version* beautifully states it, “he is able to save to the uttermost”) since he is always available to act as high priest. In addition to saving people, Jesus—since he is alive—can even *intercede for* (to meet or talk to) people.

Jesus is so overly qualified for this priesthood. At least six of his virtues are mentioned. He is *holy* (unpolluted), *blameless* (void of evil), *pure* (unsoiled or Godlike), *set apart from sinners*, *exalted* (elevated above the heavens), and *sinless* because he does not need to offer sacrifices for himself. Jesus performed his major salvific act on the cross *once for all*. It need not be repeated like typical sacrifices. High priests come and go, but Jesus stays because he was *appointed and made perfect*. Jesus’ priesthood, at the end of the day, is not weird but special. ■

APPLICATION

AN INDESTRUCTIBLE LIFE

BY DAVID FAUST

"How long will it last?" That's a good question to ask if you're buying a car or a kitchen appliance. Most things don't last forever. Junkyards are filled with cast-off treasures, and history is littered with the rubble of proud and once-powerful nations.

The Babylonians tore apart God's beautiful temple and destroyed the Holy City of Jerusalem, and centuries later—when the city and the temple had been rebuilt—Jesus foretold that the Romans would tear them down again.

Despite all the benefits of modern medicine, we can't prevent the destruction of another kind of temple. Someday our bodies will succumb to the grave.

Nature tends toward disorder, disintegration, and death—it's the second law of thermodynamics at work. Clothes wear out. Land erodes. Metal rusts. Wood weathers. Homes and gardens require constant upkeep. Fortunes can be destroyed (and so can careers and reputations).

Twenty years ago, terrorist attacks brought massive buildings crumbling to the ground on 9/11. Someday the stars, including our mighty sun, will burn out. Nothing seems indestructible except fictional movie superheroes. Our hearts long for eternity, but death appears to rule the day.

Yet, according to the Bible, indestructible things do in fact exist; just don't expect to find them among worldly treasures that are aging like an outdated wardrobe. The psalmist compares temporary things with the eternal God and tells the Lord, "They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But you remain the same, and your years will never end" (Psalm 102:26-27). Another psalm describes the Messiah in forever terms. "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: 'You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek'" (Psalm 110:4).

Mystery Man

Melchizedek is a mysterious figure in Scripture. He stepped into the pages of Genesis as the righteous king of Salem ("peace"), foreshadowing the Prince of peace and King of kings. Long before priests and Levites served in the temple, Melchizedek was a priest of God Most High, foreshadowing Christ, our true High Priest. Melchizedek brought bread and wine to bless Abraham centuries before Jesus blessed the bread and the cup at the Last Supper. Abraham showed respect for Scripture's mystery man by presenting Melchizedek a tenth of his wealth (Genesis 14:18-20).

Jesus Christ didn't come from the bloodline of the priestly tribe of Levi, but like Melchizedek, he derived his priestly credentials from a higher source. Hebrews 7:16 says Christ "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."

An indestructible life? That's what we all want, but where can we find it? Not in philosophies spawned in the minds of ordinary men and women. Not even in the laws and traditions surrounding the Old Testament priesthood. Christ himself owns "the power of an indestructible life." Crucifixion could kill his body, but it couldn't destroy his life. His resurrection proves he can bring us indestructible hope and "an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade" (1 Peter 1:4).

When choosing a worldview and deciding what we'll trust when facing death, here is a good question to ask: "How long will it last?" If the answer isn't "forever," we're aiming too low.

Personal Challenge: In an average day, how much time do you spend thinking about things that last forever compared to things that are temporary? What steps could you take to fix your mind "on things above, not on earthly things" (Colossians 3:2)? ■

DISCOVERY

BY MICHAEL C. MACK

1. How specifically did you offer encouragement and hope to others last week?
2. In what ways did you receive encouragement over the past week?

Ask two people to read aloud **Hebrews 7:11-28** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to briefly summarize the passage.

3. What main point was the writer communicating in this passage?
4. Let's dig deeper:
 - Melchizedek, whose name means "king of righteousness," was king of Salem (*Salem* means "peace"). From these facts and other insights from this passage, in what ways was Melchizedek a type for Christ?
 - In this passage, what proofs does the writer provide for why the order of Melchizedek is superior to the order of Aaron (that is, the Levitical priesthood, which represents the Old Covenant law)? (*Look for both doctrinal and practical reasonings.*)
 - What benefits does Jesus' high priesthood have for his followers?
 - Why is it vital that we have a high priest who is eternal and permanent?
5. What do you learn about Jesus' nature from this passage?
6. What do you learn about yourself?
7. What reasons does this passage give you to trust and obey Jesus?
8. How would you use this passage to help someone—especially someone who has a law-based belief system and/or a religion that depends on weekly and/or yearly sacrifices to take away sins—put their faith in Christ?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete this sentence: "This week, I will . . ."
10. What needs do you have today and in the upcoming week?

For Next Week: Read and reflect on **Hebrews 8:1–9:10**. You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. 📖