

We have a lot to cover tonight as we are going to try and tackle all of Chapter **7**. Before we get going, however, I want to frame the next few chapters. Chapters **7**, **8**, and **9** once again draw our attention to the supremacy of Christ. And the reason the Spirit does this is 1) to help these believers understand that they should not waste any of their time even considering shrinking back into religion; and 2) to convince them that because Christ is bigger and better that they can also be bigger and better for they belong to Christ. The Spirit wants us to internalize this as truth and live in such a way that we are not moved by the temporal things of this life (including, as in the case of these believers, times of great suffering). We will see all of this play out in Chapters **10-12** as we are challenged to be men and women of faith.

But let's back up a few verses from last week so we can get into the flow of this passage.

***Hebrews 6:17-20***

So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

***Hebrews 7:1-10***

For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever.

See how great this man was to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth of the spoils! And those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment in the law to take tithes from the people, that is, from their brothers, though these also are descended from Abraham. But this man who does not have his descent from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior. In the one case tithes are received by mortal men, but in the other case, by one of whom it is testified that he lives. One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him.

So with this introduction the Spirit is setting up His counter-argument to the Jews by reaching back once again to the story of this man named Melchizedek who serves in the New Testament as a type of Christ. The Jews had been attempting to confuse these believers by telling them that the priesthood of Jesus was not legitimate since Jesus did not descend from the tribe of Levi according to the Law as did all the Jewish priests, for He descended from the tribe of Judah.

The Spirit's argument is that since Melchizedek is bigger and better than Abraham and all that came from Abraham (including the Jewish priesthood), Jesus who is a priest in the line of Melchizedek must also be bigger and better.

This tale of this man Melchizedek, in **Genesis 14:18-20** has the feel of an urban legend. The story goes that Abraham and 318 men trained in his household were in hot pursuit of this huge army comprised of 4-different kings. They had invaded Abraham's homeland and taken captive his relatives. Abraham and his men caught up to this army and slaughtered them all and recaptured all his own people as well as all the possessions that had been stolen. It is one of those totally epic stories of the Old Testament.

On his return from the slaughter, Melchizedek, king of Salem and **priest of God Most High**, shows up with bread and wine and he blessed Abraham. However, the fact that he was a **priest of God** should cause you to step back a bit. Keep in mind that he was a priest before there was any such thing as Judaism or the priesthood. Abraham had not even had Isaac and the Law would not come about for over 400 years.

This fascinates me in the same way as when I read the book of Job which was also pre-Judaism. In fact, pre-everything we know about the way God revealed Himself through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and subsequently Moses and others, there were people who had a deep understanding of the Lord and shared an intense relationship with Him. To me this answers the question that skeptics raise about the pygmies in Africa; you know the arguments. Well, it's pretty clear from passages like this, **Proverbs 8:17** and **Jeremiah 29:13** that those who seek the

Lord will find Him and come to know Him in a very personal and intimate way— He makes sure of it regardless of where a person lives.

So Melchizedek was known as a *priest* of the Lord. Earlier I said he was kind of an urban legend because according to Hebrews we are told that he is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life and that all sounds pretty freaky. Now I doubt this means that he was literally without father or mother (although it could literally mean that), but most likely it means one of a couple of things. It could mean that his parents were of no significance and no reputation; therefore, there is no recorded genealogy for anyone to trace. As such, he is literally without descent.

But this passage is most likely to be understood from the Jewish perspective of gentile lineage. You see a Jew never gave consideration to the paternal genealogy of a gentile and since Melchizedek was a Canaanite they would consider him to be without a Father and without Mother. Even though he is given honor by Abraham he was still considered to be from an accursed seed since he was not from the seed of Abraham—the seed of promise—and therefore was without the honor of a recognized genealogy. In this way, Melchizedek was a lot like Jesus who was also without a recognized paternal father.

It is also said that he had neither beginning of days nor end of life. I find it so intriguing that the Spirit speaks of Melchizedek in such a mysterious way as if he just dropped down from heaven and became this priest that lives forever. Now, as far as we know, he was human so most likely he did not drop out of the sky; however, for some reason nothing about his life was ever recorded. The Jews were very meticulous about keeping records. The Bible is filled with genealogies

about when people were born, how long they lived, who their parents were, and everything was so detailed; but the Gentiles not so much. This guy came and went like a ghost and other than this little story of his interactions with Abraham, there is simply nothing additional recorded about him anywhere.

And since there was never a recorded end to his priesthood, it's as if it continues onward throughout time and in this way he resembles the Son of God who continues as a priest forever. As we know, Jesus, our great high priest is without beginning and end. According to ***John 1:1***, ***Colossians 1:15-18***, ***Hebrews 1:12***, and ***Revelation 22:12***, Jesus always has been and always will be; He is the alpha and the omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

The parallels between Melchizedek and Jesus are strong, which is why Melchizedek is a type. Consider that his name meant both King of righteousness (in Hebrew literally, the justifier of those who dwell in him—which is really cool) and King of peace. The King who is also a priest.

So Melchizedek comes out, meets Abraham and says this blessing over him that was really not all that impressive as far as blessings go. All he said was: “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand.” And suddenly, as if this blessing was the most incredible thing Abraham ever heard, he responded by giving this priest 10% of all the spoils of war; I mean it was nice and all for Melchizedek to say those things, but, for real, 10% of the take.

Who knows what came over Abraham; but clearly he either knew this guy or else Melchizedek's reputation as one who knew and served the living God sure preceded him. Melchizedek may not have had a genealogy but he sure had a

name. But either way, Abraham knew that he was in the presence of someone that was far greater than him and someone who was due great homage.

Now it was a recognized tradition for warriors to give some portion of the spoil to the god or gods that they thought brought them victory, but this transaction seems out of the blue. There is nothing in the story before or after that indicates that Abraham and Melchizedek had any kind of relationship. The point of the story is that Melchizedek's place in the spiritual hierarchy, by virtue of his priesthood, was superior to that of Abraham. Abraham knew it and paid homage to this priesthood; he paid the tithe, it was not the other way around.

"See how great this man was." Who was he? Where did he really come from? How did he become a priest? How did he, this Canaanite gentile, know the Lord God? Is he buried somewhere? Can he be found? Everything is cloaked in mystery and intrigue. The picture that is being painted for us is that in some strange way Abraham was honoring Jesus Christ. In fact, some people believe that Melchizedek was a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus. We don't know for sure, but we do not that Abraham was in some mysterious way exalting the Messiah and the Messiah's priesthood above all others.

In addition, notice that it says that Melchizedek was a king. That means that it is more than likely that he probably did not need the money. So unlike the Aaronic priests who received tithes in order to pay the monthly bills (it was how priests made their living), Abraham seemed to give these riches to Melchizedek simply because he held this great office of priest of God Most High.

The Spirit also drives home the point that since Melchizedek blessed Abraham that he was superior both in position and authority. He was the man, as we would

say. Notice it also makes the point that under the Levitical Order tithes were received by mortal men; in other words, men who die. But since there is no record of Melchizedek ever dying, he is represented as still living on into perpetuity. Therefore, his priesthood is uninterrupted by mortality, is unchanging, and therefore in all respects superior.

As the Spirit says, it's as if the Levitical priests who receive tithes from men actually pay tithes to Melchizedek through their ancestor Abraham who lived over 400 years before the Law was actually given. This is kind of like putting the icing on the cake. Melchizedek rules; therefore, the one whose priesthood is in the order of Melchizedek is clearly superior to the Levitical priesthood.

***Hebrews 7:11-22***

Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron? For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.

This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life. For it is witnessed of him, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek." On

the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.

And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever.'" This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.

Just so you might take note, **7:17** was a quote from *Psalm 110:4* which is uniformly considered by the Jews to speak of the Messiah.

Now this part of the argument would have been received like a cold blade through the heart. It is in essence saying that the entire system of Judaism is flawed and impotent and is unable to accomplish the very thing that is needed for man to have a relationship with a holy God, and that is perfection. God is perfect and therefore man must be perfect or there can be no sustainable relationship. The priesthood of Aaron simply could not get it done even though they were the magistrates of the perfect Law (*Psalm 19:7*).

And since these priests and their system could not get it done, there needed to be a change in both the priesthood and the Law. A new priest would arise, but not from the order of Aaron and the long lineage of priests; rather, from the order of Melchizedek. This new priest would come from an order that would allow him to assume the role of both priest and king; hence, Jesus came from the tribe of Judah—the tribe of the kings.



You see the law made nothing perfect. According to *Isaiah 42:21*, the Law was given to us in order to show the world that only God is good and that God alone is righteous. In other words, the Law proved beyond shadow of a doubt that we are not good, that we are not righteous, and that despite the fact that most of us have swallowed the original lie that we can be like God, we simply cannot.

The purpose of the Law was not to provide a pathway to salvation, but to show us our need for a redeemer, our need for someone or something greater than us who can rescue us from our dark, depraved and helpless condition. The Law was given to point us to the Messiah and our absolute and unconditional need to have one who would mediate on our behalf.

I cannot tell you how this one truth—that only God is good—is probably the hardest truth for religious people to accept. Just this past week, I had someone tell me that they struggled with the idea that God loves them just because He does and that they wanted God to love them because they somehow earned it or deserved it. You laugh, but I know you have thought that way; I know I have.

When I was going through some of my darkest days of suffering I literally thought that I did not deserve it. If you could have peered into my mind you would have found me repeating to God all the ways that I worked for Him, served Him, and did all this great stuff for Him; and, therefore, clearly did not deserve the way He was treating me. What a fool. How did I even think for a moment that I had anything to offer a perfect God?

Believe me, I am no longer confused. I am thoroughly convinced that only God is good. That is why I am so thankful that He was willing to give me His life and make me new, make me holy, make me acceptable, and even make me perfect.

That is what Jesus does for us—that is the hope that is found in Jesus. That is why we can boldly follow him behind the veil and enter into the Holy of Holies into the presence of our Dad (the Lord God) who always assures us a glad welcome.

If you think about it, our arrogance as believers is sickening. To even think for a moment that we have anything to offer God is ludicrous. Practically everything about our lives attests to the fact that only God is good and we are not. Everything we do is marked with weakness, error, and is plagued with self-centered, self-seeking desires. Yet, even Job who lived over 400 years before the Law (probably around the time of Abraham) understood his need for someone beyond himself. In **Job 9:32-35** we find him crying out for one who would mediate between him and the holy God and who would make all things better. Unlike so many of us, Job was actually convinced He needed a savior.

In addition, Paul, who was considered blameless in terms of keeping the Law, said, “by the works of the law no flesh will be justified” (**Galatians 2:16**). And in **Galatians 3:19** and **Romans 5:20** he said that the Law was given to show people their sin.

So this is an area in which we must relent. We must relinquish this silly notion that we have anything “good” to offer God. We must stop trying to earn our place with God and stop demanding that He recognizes all the “good” that we do for Him. We need to agree with Him when He says that our hearts are the most deceitful of all things and desperately wicked (**Jeremiah 17:9**). We must resign ourselves to the reality that anything that comes from our own efforts is tainted and corrupted with this wicked poison; and this is no exaggeration. If we would let the word of God be authoritative over our lives I believe each of us would

develop a deeper appreciation for the word “grace” and a greater understanding of the mercy that has been afforded us in Christ Jesus.

So the Law was weak and useless in terms of bringing us into relationship with God because that was not its purpose. The priests of Judaism kind of missed this one. They kept trying to shove a square block into a round hole but it did not work—no one could keep the Law; no one could be perfect. The Law existed, plain and simple, to show us our need for God by demonstrating that only God is good. This reality was hard to stomach so the religious leaders chose to live in denial—which seems to be one of the most common ways we humans deal with the realities of life that we just do not like.

And their denial became so entrenched that it became part of their cultural dna such that generation after generation missed the truth that it was only through faith that a person had life (***Galatians 3:11***). They were lied to and they believed the lie; and despite the fact that Abraham was declared righteous simply because he believed, well over 400 years before the Law was given, this lie became the bedrock for the religion. It is not unlike the lie many have swallowed in the “religion of Christianity.” We have just substituted the “works of the Law” with our own effort to gain approval and blessing from God. What a waste.

Therefore, with Jesus a better hope is introduced; a hope that would allow us to draw near to God and be in a relationship with Him for real because of what He did for us and not because of anything we do for him. The word “introduced” is actually an emphatic compound phrase that literally means “super-introduction.” So the Spirit is contrasting the excessive power in which our true hope was

introduced through Jesus Christ with the weakness of the Law, which gave no hope for perfection but only the certain guarantee of guilt and failure.

Do you understand why another kind of priest was needed? The priests of the Law were mortal and ceaselessly performed duties that never made anyone holy. Therefore, we needed the kind of priest who had the innate power and the ability—due to His indestructible life—to bring us into perfection. And since Jesus has always existed and always will, since He conquered death in the flesh and lives as a supernatural (yet physical) being, He is our hope and the one who will forever be our priest according to the order of Melchizedek (**1 Timothy 1:11; Colossians 1:27**). As such He is vastly superior to anything Judaism or any other religion has to offer. Oh, and like Melchizedek, He is also our king; king and priest—a new order!

Just in case you missed it; in the passage from **Psalm 110**, it was God who attested through David to the fact that the Messiah would be a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. And this prophecy was uniformly accepted amongst the Jews as speaking about the Messiah. The point being that they knew the Messiah would belong to a priesthood that not only pre-existed the Aaronic priesthood by over 400 years but was also superior in all respects.

In addition, this prophecy was given nearly 500 years after the Law. I believe this was for the purpose of shocking everyone out of their denial; to remind them that the current priesthood was not enough and could not get the job done. It pointed forward to the coming priesthood of Melchizedek which would usher in a new life, a new order, with new privileges and advantages.

This phrase that God's attestation was not without an oath is powerful. The Aaronic priests assumed their duties if they could prove that they descended from Levi; that was the only requirement. But Jesus assumed His priesthood with an oath from the Father.

As we read in **6:17** God binds Himself with an oath anytime that he wants to communicate the unchangeable character of his purpose. He swore to Abraham that in His seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed (**Genesis 22:16-18**). He swore to the rebellious Israelites who hardened their hearts against God that they would not enter into His rest (**Deuteronomy 1:34-35**). He swore to Moses that he would not get to enter the Promised Land (**Deuteronomy 4:21**). He swore to David that His seed should endure forever and his throne unto all generations (**Psalms 89:4**). And He swore with an unalterable and immutable oath that Jesus would reign forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Further, this great priesthood would not change whereas the Aaronic priesthood not only changed, for it was not established with an oath, but it is clearly no longer even necessary. This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant. The old covenant promised the Jews certain blessings here on the earth as long as they kept the Law (which they were never very good at doing), but the new covenant opens for us, **in our now**, the kingdom of heaven and it is all based on the fact that Jesus fulfilled the Law in us.

**Hebrews 7:23-25**

The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but he holds his priesthood permanently,

because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

This passage drives eternity into our now. The word to “save” is in the present active tense; thus, every moment of our existence we are saved to the uttermost. There is nothing left wanting. Unlike the Aaronic priesthood and the practices of all other religions that required everyone to keep up their “work” and keep up their sacrifices, in Christ there is no other sacrifice that needs to be made. His sacrifice was perfect and according to ***Ephesians 4:24*** He has made us perfect. He did for us what the Law could never do and what is amazing is that there is nothing we can do about it. “Tetelestai”—it is finished; this truth can never be altered for it has been made with an oath. How comforting is that. This truth is one of the major reasons we can take great confidence in who we are in Christ.

Sure for now we struggle with our *Old Sinful Nature*, but that is only temporary. Our *Old Sinful Nature* will pass away; it will not follow us throughout eternity. In contrast, our ***New Creation***, which Christ imparts to every believer, is eternal. We have been made right with God for we are saved to the uttermost.

Furthermore, Jesus lives to always make intercession on our behalf—again in the present active tense. Therefore, even when your *Old Sinful Nature* rears its ugly head and you give the enemy opportunity to make accusations against you, Jesus intervenes and stands between you and the enemy and declares you righteous.

***Romans 8:33-34, 38***

Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself. Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us...And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love.

Do you understand what this truly means? I should be hearing shouts of joy and excitement. We have hope in this life! No one else does. No one else can live in such freedom with the assurance and conviction that they have been saved to the uttermost. Jesus our great mediator always and forever assures our right standing with God. He always intercedes for us, He always intervenes for us, and He has justified us. Praise Jesus!

***Hebrews 7:26-28***

For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

This final part of the passage really sticks it not just to the Aaronic priesthood but to everyone who thinks that they can be “good” like God. Well let’s compare and determine if you are enough. Apart from Christ: are you holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted about the heavens—exalted above all of creation? Do you have the need to daily deal with the issue of your sin? Can anything you do make you perfect? Are you as weak and impotent as every one of those priests who thought they could do it right? Has the word of the oath appointed you as Son? Clearly the answers are no, no, no, no, no, no, yes, no, yes, and emphatically no!

Only Jesus fits this bill for only God is good and only the Son has been appointed by the word of oath. And this oath supersedes the Law and His priesthood is perfect in every respect for He is the One.

In closing, I want to make a final point about this passage. Remember in Chapter **6** in those difficult passages I said (and have said throughout our study) that this letter is written to Jewish believers and not to unbelievers or some mixed community of Jewish believers and unbelievers. Well one of the evidences of that I believe is found in the Spirit’s argument in this passage.

Did you notice that He does not try and prove that Jesus is the Messiah spoken about in **Psalm 110**; rather, He assumes that everyone knows that Jesus is the Messiah. He just argues that the priesthood of the Messiah is vastly superior to that of Judaism. So there is no evangelistic apologetic, not outreach to an unbelieving soul, just an attempt to get these believers to realize that they are absolute fools if they turn tail and choose to return to religion.

With that said, let’s pray.