

# BETTER IN EVERY WAY

## HEBREWS 7



T. M. Moore

*A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe*

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

Better in Every Way: Hebrews 7  
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## Hebrews 7: Introduction

Jesus has been ordained a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek. He is our great High Priest because He offered a better sacrifice, leads us into a better hope, has a better ministry, and serves a better covenant. Everything about Jesus is just better. Period.

The writer is trying to encourage his first readers not to drift from their great salvation, but to cling to Him Who saves us to the uttermost. Jesus is where we'll find true rest from everything that troubles or disturbs us, for Jesus alone brings us into the very presence of God.

We're pleased to make this resource available for personal or group study at no charge, and we hope you will find this series helpful in realizing more of the presence, promise, and power of the Kingdom of God.

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# 1 Name Game

## *Introduction*

His rebuke, admonition, and exhortation completed (chapters 5 and 6), the writer returns to a theme he introduced in chapter 5, that of the mysterious Melchizedek. He introduces his argument in this chapter by explicating the name *Melchizedek* as crucial to understanding this mysterious Old Testament figure. Melchizedek is what is referred to in Biblical interpretation as a *type* – he was real and important in his own day, but fraught with significance for greater things to come.

*Meditate on Psalm 110.*

*Read Hebrews 7.1-3*

*Think it through.*

1. As we shall see, the point our writer makes about Melchizedek is very important to his argument about the superiority of Jesus Christ over all aspects of Hebrew religion. Again, why was he working so hard to make this point? You might want to review Genesis 14.18-20. Melchizedek was King of Salem, an ancient name for what would become Jerusalem at the time of David. What was symbolized in his being king of this place? What were the first readers of this epistle seeking by starting to return to Judaism? The King of Peace blessed Abraham. What does this suggest about the *sufficiency* of Abraham – here symbolizing the Hebrew religion – for providing the *rest* (peace) the first readers of Hebrews were seeking? Peace (rest) was available, and the readers of this book could know the blessings of peace, as Abraham did, but not by returning to Judaism.

2. The name *Melchizedek* means, in Hebrew, “King of Righteousness.” He who was King of Peace was also King of Righteousness. What does this suggest about righteousness and peace? Were these first readers acting in righteousness by drifting from their faith in Christ? Explain. Meditate on Romans 14.17, 18. Was Paul aware of this close connection between these two terms? The writer of Hebrews also points out that, lacking father or mother or genealogy, Melchizedek was “made like the Son of God” – an *eternal* king and priest. He was *not* the Son of God, as some suppose, but he was “made like the Son of God.” Why was it important to make this connection between Christ and Melchizedek?

*Meditate.*

“This name, Melchizedek, in the Hebrew and Syriac language means ‘king of righteousness’; he ruled over Salem, and the word Salem is translated as peace. His intention, therefore, is to present him in this way as a type of Christ the Lord: according to the apostle he is our peace, and according to the Old Testament author he is our righteousness.” *Theodoret of Cyr (393-466 AD)*

*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace...*  
Ephesians 2.13, 14

*Your Kingdom is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit, O Lord! I long to know Your joy and peace, so help me to press on in...*

*Pray Psalm 110.1-7.*

Meditate on the images used to present Jesus in this psalm. How did David think about Him? How can this help you in looking to and considering Jesus?

**Psalm 110.1-7** (*Aurelia: The Church's One Foundation*)

“Sit by Me at My right hand,”  
The Lord says to my Lord,  
“Until I make Your foot stand  
On all who hate Your Word.”  
From in His Church the Savior  
Rules all His enemies;  
While those who know His favor  
Go forth the Lord to please.

Filled with the Spirit's power,  
In holy robes of love,  
From early morning's hour  
They serve their Lord above.  
Christ reigns a priest forever,  
The King of Righteousness  
And King of Peace who ever  
His chosen ones will bless.

The Lord at Your right hand, Lord,  
In wrath shall shatter kings,  
When judgment by His strong Word  
He to the nations brings.  
Then, all His foes defeated,  
He takes His hard-won rest,  
In glorious triumph seated  
With us, redeemed and blest!

## 2 Greater than Levi

### *Introduction*

In Judaism of the first century, the role of priests was paramount. They embodied all that was good and true and reliable in Judaism, and they were the final authorities on all matters of faith and practice. In their vestments and work, the priests represented the very presence of God. The writer of Hebrews shows how, in the incident involving Abraham and Melchizedek, even the Levitical priests were subject to a higher and eternal Priest. Some first-century Jewish priests understood this. So should the readers of Hebrews.

*Meditate Exodus 29.38-45.*

*Read Hebrews 7.4-9.*

*Think it through.*

1. Why is it significant that “Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils” to Melchizedek? In Judaism, priests received the tithes from the people. But in the case of Abraham and Melchizedek, the Levitical priests – still in the loins of their father – gave tithes to the King of Salem and King of Righteousness (cf. v. 9). How does this bolster the writer’s argument against drifting back to Judaism? Where should his readers expect to find the blessing and rest they were seeking (vv. 6, 7)?
2. Since Christ has been appointed a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, what should the Levitical priests, following the example of Abraham, have been doing (cf. Acts 6.7)? Why were the first readers of this epistle making a mistake by seeking rest under the authoritative care of Levitical priests? The role of priests is to bring people to God. Everyone has some view of God – of that which is ultimately good and true and most to be desired. And everyone therefore has some idea of a “priesthood” whereby they may come into the presence of God. Is this true of those who adhere to a secular worldview? Explain.

*Meditate.*

“Although the Levites are in all other respects equal in rank with the other tribes, nonetheless because the other tribes give tithes while the Levites receive them, the Levites are clearly superior. But if this is the case, then clearly also the same principle applies to Abraham and Melchizedek, the giver and recipient, respectively. Consequently, the type of Christ [Melchizedek] is greater than the patriarch Abraham.” *Photius (820-891 AD)*

*Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith. Acts 6.7*

*I will only find true blessing for my soul in You, O Lord. And to that end I give You...*

*Pray Psalm 110.1-7.*

David compares the people of God to “volunteers” who go forth like the dew of the morning in the beauty of holiness. Use these thoughts to pray for the day ahead, and the people you will meet in your Personal Mission Field.

**Psalm 110.1-7** (*Aurelia: The Church’s One Foundation*)

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The Lord says to my Lord,

“Until I make Your foot stand

On all who hate Your Word.”

From in His Church the Savior

Rules all His enemies;  
While those who know His favor  
Go forth the Lord to please.

Filled with the Spirit's power,  
In holy robes of love,  
From early morning's hour  
They serve their Lord above.  
Christ reigns a priest forever,  
The King of Righteousness  
And King of Peace who ever  
His chosen ones will bless.

The Lord at Your right hand, Lord,  
In wrath shall shatter kings,  
When judgment by His strong Word  
He to the nations brings.  
Then, all His foes defeated,  
He takes His hard-won rest,  
In glorious triumph seated  
With us, redeemed and blest!

### 3 A Little Exercise in Logic

#### *Introduction*

The book of Hebrews provides an excellent study in how reason and revelation work together to enable us to know truth and rest in the Lord. Today's verses provide a microcosm of that study. The writer begins with what the Old Testament reveals about his subject (the priesthood). Then he applies logic to lead his readers in understanding that teaching. In the process, we gain important insight concerning how to understand the Old Testament Law in the light of the promised Priest (Ps. 110) and Prophet (Deut. 18.15-19) and King (Gen. 49.8-11; Zech. 3.1-10) of God.

*Read Deuteronomy 18.15-19; Genesis 49.8-11; Zechariah 3.1-10.*

*Read Hebrews 7.11-13.*

#### *Think it through.*

1. The promise of a priest in the order of Melchizedek, given through David, signaled that the existing priesthood would at some point be replaced. Why would that be necessary (v. 11)? What does the writer mean by *perfection*? Through David, God pointed Israel back *before* the Levitical priesthood to encourage them to look *ahead* to a King/Priest whom David identified as "my Lord." Toward the end of the period of the Old Testament, Zechariah also looked ahead to such a King/Priest – one like Melchizedek. Zechariah said this King/Priest would be named Joshua. The writer of Hebrews does not cite the Zechariah reference, but we can be sure his readers would have known of it. The implication is, therefore, that because "another priest" would be raised up – the "Lord Joshua" – perfection and the *rest* that comes with it would *not* be through the Levitical priesthood or the Old Testament Law. Consequently, the Law relating to the work of priests would also have to change. Why? How does this teach us to think about those Old Testament laws that relate to priests and their work? But are those laws without any value whatsoever (cf. 1 Cor. 9.13, 14)? Explain.

2. The writer employs a logical construction to expose the folly of trying to find rest and perfection by returning to the authority of the priests of Judaism. He begins with Old Testament revelation about priesthoods. Then his argument follows the construction, "if this, then this." If a *new* and *eternal* Priest and Priesthood ("a priest forever" – *forever* goes both backward and forward) was promised, then the *old* and *temporal* order of priests would be no longer necessary. And all the laws relating to that old priesthood would also necessarily be changed. How can you see this argument was crucial to the writer's larger purpose in this book? How do divine revelation and reason, *guided* by revelation, work to help us understand the truth of God?

#### *Meditate.*

"The mystery of the divine plan is worthy of admiration: as Christ the Lord, eternal king as he is, was styled our high priest, so the tribe of Judah, which was formerly kingly, attained the priesthood through the Lord." *Theodoret of Cyr (393-466 AD)*

*For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all. 1 Corinthians 15.25-28*

*Heavenly Father, You have made Jesus Lord and Christ, King and High Priest, Savior and Redeemer of the world! And I am His disciple, sent by Jesus to...*

*Pray Psalm 110.1-7.*

What enemies of Jesus and your salvation do you expect to encounter today? How will Jesus put them under His feet through your going forth into your Personal Mission Field. Meditate and pray on these questions.

**Psalm 110.1-7** (*Aurelia: The Church's One Foundation*)

“Sit by Me at My right hand,”

The Lord says to my Lord,

“Until I make Your foot stand

On all who hate Your Word.”

From in His Church the Savior

Rules all His enemies;

While those who know His favor

Go forth the Lord to please.

Filled with the Spirit's power,

In holy robes of love,

From early morning's hour

They serve their Lord above.

Christ reigns a priest forever,

The King of Righteousness

And King of Peace who ever

His chosen ones will bless.

The Lord at Your right hand, Lord,

In wrath shall shatter kings,

When judgment by His strong Word

He to the nations brings.

Then, all His foes defeated,

He takes His hard-won rest,

In glorious triumph seated

With us, redeemed and blest!

## 4 A Better Hope

### *Introduction*

What qualifies Jesus to be the means of eternal life? His own eternal life of righteousness, which He freely gives to all who look to Him as High Priest and hope. The religious life of Judaism, outlined in great detail in the Old Testament, was never meant to be the way to eternal life with God. It was always temporary, provisional, and *typical* (in the sense of being a type). Old Testament religion always pointed forward to a coming priest in the order of Melchizedek, and Jesus is that priest. The Old Testament faithful – like Simeon – understood this. But now that Jesus has come, He is a better hope, because He lives forever.

*Read Luke 2.25-35.*

*Read Hebrews 7.14-19.*

### *Think it through.*

1. The coming of Jesus, from the tribe of Judah, to fulfill the role of High Priest in the order of Melchizedek, effectively did away with the role of the Levitical priests. Why? What qualified Jesus, rather than those priests, to be the source of “a better hope”? What were the implications of this for the first readers of the book of Hebrews? What are the implications for any who are trying to attain their vision of the good life by any means *other* than Jesus?

2. The hope which Old Testament priests could offer was that of temporary atonement and provisional restoration to the favor of God. How did they accomplish this? Why was this only a *fleeting* hope? How did the work of these priests teach the faithful of Israel – like Simeon – to look forward to a *better* hope? The Law made no one perfect; Jesus makes all who rest in Him perfect by grace through faith. In what sense are we who believe *perfect* in Jesus? What makes this a *better hope*? Why is this an *eternal* rather than a *fleeting* hope? In what sense do “we draw near to God” through Jesus? How and when should we expect to know this?

### *Meditate.*

“Was the law then of no use? It was indeed of use and of great use, but to make humans perfect it was of no use. For in this respect he says, ‘the law made nothing perfect.’ All were figures, all shadows: circumcision, sacrifice, sabbath. Therefore they could not reach through the soul, and thus they pass away and gradually withdraw. But ‘a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.’” *John Chrysostom (344-407 AD)*

*“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”* Matthew 11.28-30

*Thank You, Father, that in Jesus Christ I am perfect, and I have perfect hope in Him! Help me today to increase in...*

*Pray Psalm 110.1-7.*

How does this psalm portray the hope and rest we have in Jesus? Meditate on that hope and rest, and give God thanks for our eternal High Priest.

**Psalm 110.1-7** (*Aurelia: The Church's One Foundation*)

“Sit by Me at My right hand,”

The Lord says to my Lord,

“Until I make Your foot stand

On all who hate Your Word.”  
From in His Church the Savior  
Rules all His enemies;  
While those who know His favor  
Go forth the Lord to please.

Filled with the Spirit’s power,  
In holy robes of love,  
From early morning’s hour  
They serve their Lord above.  
Christ reigns a priest forever,  
The King of Righteousness  
And King of Peace who ever  
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The Lord at Your right hand, Lord,  
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He to the nations brings.  
Then, all His foes defeated,  
He takes His hard-won rest,  
In glorious triumph seated  
With us, redeemed and blest!

## 5 A Better Covenant

### *Introduction*

Those priests who served under the Old Covenant were not able to save anyone, including themselves. This is why a new Priest was required, One possessing an indestructible life, so that He might save forever all who come to God through Him. Jesus is that Priest, and in Him God has inaugurated a better and an enduring covenant with those who trust in Him, just as He promised He would.

Read *Jeremiah 33.14-26*.

Read *Hebrews 7.20-25*.

### *Think it through.*

1. The writer makes the point that Jesus was established as a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek by an oath of the Lord. Why is this important? Is this the way priests were typically ordained to office (v. 21)? How did this oath make Jesus' ordination as High Priest especially significant? As High Priest, "Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant." What is a *surety*? How does Jesus fulfill that role? What are the implications of His being *surety* for this new covenant?

2. Jesus is not only High Priest; He is the *final* High Priest. There will be no more High Priests or priests at all after Him. Why not? The phrase "save to the uttermost" might just as well be translated "save completely" or even "save in every way." How many different ways do lost sinners need to be saved? How does this help us in thinking about our "great salvation" (Heb. 2.3)? According to verse 25, to what are we saved through Jesus? What does this suggest about the end and substance of our great salvation? How should we expect to experience this? Does it matter to you that Jesus "always lives to make intercession" for you? For what is He interceding on your behalf?

### *Meditate.*

"Since the New Covenant promised us the kingdom of heaven, resurrection from the dead and life everlasting, though none of these is in sight, he had to call the Lord Jesus its 'surety,' who through his own resurrection confirmed the hope of our resurrection, on the one hand, and on the other continued to give his own resurrection through the miracles worked by the apostles." *Theodoret of Cyr (393-499 AD)*

*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.* Ephesians 2.13

*Lord Jesus, bring me to the Father today, and keep me there by Your constant intercessions, so that I...*

### *Pray Psalm 110.1-7.*

In this psalm, what are the Lord's people doing? Is this what you should be doing? Pray that Jesus will intercede for you to have the strength and faith to be a source of refreshment and renewal to the people you encounter today.

### **Psalm 110.1-7** (*Aurelia: The Church's One Foundation*)

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On all who hate Your Word."

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Filled with the Spirit's power,  
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And King of Peace who ever  
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In wrath shall shatter kings,  
When judgment by His strong Word  
He to the nations brings.  
Then, all His foes defeated,  
He takes His hard-won rest,  
In glorious triumph seated  
With us, redeemed and blest!

## 6 Just What We Need

### *Introduction*

Jesus is just what we need in a High Priest – sinless, selfless, peerless, harmless, deathless. Why go anywhere else?

*Meditate on Psalm 110.*

*Read Hebrews 7.26-28.*

*Think it through.*

1. What makes Jesus “fitting for us” as a High Priest? What was the nature of His “once for all” sacrifice? Why is that sacrifice superior to those of the Levitical priests? In what sense has Jesus “become higher than the heavens”? What are the implications of this for those who continue faithful to Him to the end?

2. But wait a second: Why do we need a priest at all? What are the implications of *not* turning to this High Priest, Who has been “perfected forever”? Is it important that we make people aware of those implications? Explain.

*Meditate.*

“Who then is so just and holy a priest as the only Son of God, who had no need of a sacrifice for the washing away of his own sins, neither original sins nor those that are added from human life? And what could be so fittingly chosen by men to be offered for them as human flesh? And what so suitable for this immolation as mortal flesh? And what so clean for cleansing the vices of mortals as the flesh born in the womb without the contagion of carnal concupiscence, and coming from a virginal womb? And what could be so acceptably offered and received as the flesh of our sacrifice made the body of our priest?” *Augustine (354-430 AD)*

*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Corinthians 5.21*

*Thank You, Lord Jesus, my Priest, Sacrifice, Savior, Lord, Friend, and Life! Today let me show my love for You by...*

*Pray Psalm 110.1-7.*

Today, pray for the enemies of Christ, that they may come to their senses before it is too late. And pray for all believers, who are sent out each day as fresh morning dew to bring the Good News of Jesus to the world.

**Psalm 110.1-7** (*Aurelia: The Church's One Foundation*)

“Sit by Me at My right hand,”  
The Lord says to my Lord,  
“Until I make Your foot stand  
On all who hate Your Word.”  
From in His Church the Savior  
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He takes His hard-won rest,  
In glorious triumph seated  
With us, redeemed and blest!

## 7 Better in Every Way

### *Introduction*

Let's remember that the writer's goal in the book of Hebrews was to arrest his readers' drift from Christ into what seemed to them the more promising confines of their former religious community. To free themselves from the persecution they were enduring, they had damped their commitment to Christ and were flirting with the idea of returning to Judaism. They were seeking rest from the taunts, challenges, scorn, and perhaps threats of their Hebrew friends and family. But in doing so, they were in danger of forfeiting the rest in God Christ had gained for them. The writer wanted them to understand that, like Jesus, we can learn the cost and benefits of obedience through the things we suffer, and enjoy a better hope in a better covenant, because Jesus is a better High Priest, perfectly suited to meet our needs. They needed to press on, and not fall back.

*Read Philippians 3.12-16.*

*Read and Meditate on Hebrews 7.*

### *Think it through.*

1. In what ways is Jesus a High Priest like Melchizedek, and not like the Levitical priests of Israel? The writer devotes an entire chapter to this argument. Why did he think this would help his readers not to drift from Jesus? Jesus the new High Priest has done away with the need for the old priests of Israel. How is this so? What has Jesus done, and what does He do, as our High Priest that the priests of Israel could not do? How do we today benefit from Jesus being our High Priest? That is, in what sense is it "fitting for us" that Jesus is our High Priest?

2. Jesus provides a *better hope* within the framework of a *better covenant*. What does this mean? What does it mean for us to be saved "to the uttermost"? In the light of this, why is Paul's example in Philippians 3.12-16 so important? How would you explain to an unbelieving friend what it means to "come to God through Him [Jesus]"?

### *Meditate.*

"While before it was necessary that the priests were many, because death interrupted the older ones in the course of their office and they did not last forever, now there is no other high priest with our Lord, 'who lives forever to make intercession for us,' not in the victims of the sacrifices but in prayers. 'And he is able for all time to save us,' not in the earthly delights, which nourish us for a few days, but 'when we draw near to God through him' in eternity." *Ephrem the Syrian (306-373 AD)*

*"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."* Matthew 11.28

*Today, Lord, as I rest in You on this Your holy day, help me to understand more completely what it means to be saved to the uttermost, and to have You interceding for me at the Father's right hand, so that I...*

### *Pray Psalm 110.1-7.*

Make a point to pray and sing through this psalm three times today – morning, noon, and evening. Each time you pray, let the psalm help you understand something more about why Christ is our better hope, covenant, and High Priest. Praise and thank Him accordingly.

### **Psalm 110.1-7** (*Aurelia: The Church's One Foundation*)

"Sit by Me at My right hand,"

The Lord says to my Lord,

"Until I make Your foot stand

On all who hate Your Word.”  
From in His Church the Savior  
Rules all His enemies;  
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Filled with the Spirit’s power,  
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Then, all His foes defeated,  
He takes His hard-won rest,  
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*Questions for Reflection or Discussion*

1. Who was Melchizedek, and why is he important in understanding God's covenant?
2. In what ways is Jesus a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek?
3. Why does God ordaining and appointing Jesus as High Priest do away with the need for other priests and their work?
4. What does it mean to be saved to the uttermost? How does Jesus accomplish this? How would you explain this to an unsaved friend?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this study? How are you putting that lesson to work in your life?

*For prayer:*

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Thank you.