

**Hebrews 7:1-28**  
**(Genesis 14:17-24; Psalm 110:1-4)**  
**“A Perfect Priest”**

## **Introduction**

The author is writing to encourage people facing hard times and in danger of turning back from their faith and away from their community. He writes of the supremacy of Christ over everything that might otherwise claim his readers' attention and become an object of their hope. He knows that many of them are tempted to return to their former faith, and so he compares and contrasts Jesus to all that once served as a basis of their faith and practice. Over the next several chapters, he will present Jesus as our perfect priest who brings us a perfect covenant with perfect worship based upon his perfect sacrifice.

Toward that end, he has several times begun to introduce an obscure Old Testament figure named Melchizedek, who only appears in the two texts we read this morning, Genesis 14 and Psalm 110, and who is then used as a sort of prophetic precedent in the text we are now reading together. What we don't want to do is to waste time trying to figure out more than we are told out about Melchizedek. Articles have been written trying to make the case that he is pre-incarnate Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, appearing to Abraham. That is, I think, as mistaken as believing that Elijah was a pre-incarnate presence of John the Baptist, just because John was the “Elijah” promised by the later prophets. In fact, the very language of Psalm 110 argues against such a view: “You are a priest forever *after the order of* Melchizedek.” The Psalmist does not say, “Melchizedek will return,” but rather that one will come “after the order of Melchizedek.” So, it is my view that Melchizedek was exactly who Genesis declares him to be: the priest-king of Jerusalem who met Abraham when Abraham returned from battle.

But why, then, would the author of Hebrews use an obscure figure to make such an important point? Why not simply teach what he has to teach about Jesus as our great high priest? The answer is found in the nature of teaching during that period of history. Just as lawyers today seek legal precedent to make their case, ancient writers and teachers sought precedent for what they taught, and biblical writers especially sought biblical precedent for whatever they presented that might otherwise be challenged as a new teaching, contrary to Scripture (for example, Paul in Romans 4). Because Israel believed Psalm 110 to be about the coming Messiah, and Melchizedek to be a picture of him, the author uses that belief to point to Jesus.

This morning, what I hope to do is make clear four ways that our author saw Melchizedek as picture of the One whom God would one day send in order to redeem his people. So we will simply ask first, “Who was Melchizedek, and why should we care?” And then, “How does this help us understand Jesus' high priestly ministry to us?”

## Body

### 1. Who was Melchizedek, and why should we care?

- He was a royal priest, unlike Aaron: Melchizedek = “King of Righteousness,” and King of Salem = “King of Peace” (7:1-2).
- He was a permanent priest: Not in historical fact, but in the way his story is told. We never hear of him before or after he was a priest, only as a priest. This is how rabbis and scribes established precedent (7:3).
- He was a praying priest: He blessed Abraham (7:6).
- He was a great priest: A greater priest in fact than Aaron and the priests of Israel, because their ancestor, Abraham, paid him tithes and he blessed Abraham.

### 2. How does this help us understand Jesus’ high priestly ministry?

- He is a royal priest: Of the kingly line of Judah, yet also a priest (7:11-14). Merely a historical issue for 1<sup>st</sup> c. Jews, but a spiritual issue for us: Namely, his Lordship. He is not just our Savior, but also our Lord.
- He is a permanent priest: in Jesus’ case, this is not mere metaphor, but a fact, resting upon the power of an indestructible life and the truth of an unbreakable oath (7:15-24)
- He is a praying priest, who “is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them” (7:25).
- He is a perfect priest, not merely greater than Aaron, but greater than all: The author bases this on Jesus’ holy life and perfect sacrifice offered on behalf of all who are Abraham’s children through faith in God’s promises. (7:26-28).

## Conclusion

What should we take away from this? The author tells us what he wants us to take away in the words that immediately follow chapter seven: “Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven” (8:1). What then should we fear? Whom should we fear? What could possibly have the power to separate us from God’s deepest purposes for us, purposes that satisfy the deepest desires and longings of our hearts? Nothing and no one can stand before his power and majesty. Even our own brokenness and sin have no power to separate us from him if only we will draw near to him. Do you believe this word? It is a word of life, for “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” (7:25).

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