The best medicine is Jesus! It's His presence [in our lives].
John Wright

Prayer Study #517

HEBREWS CHAPTER 7

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We are now at the mid-point in our study of Hebrews, the letter to the Jewish audience whose author is unknown and disputed. Barclay says the central theme of Hebrews is *Let us draw near*, and the writer makes it clear that Jesus Christ is the only person who could take one into the very presence of God, a theme summarized in Hebrews 10:19-22, which we will cover later. Since we have some new people joining the study, I will briefly summarize the previous 6 chapters:

Chapter One: Jesus, superior to the angels and prophets, is God. This chapter contains the verse, *Sit at My right hand until I make your enemies your footstool,* an important verse found in scripture, starting with Psalm 110:1, seven times.

Chapter Two: We must heed the words of Jesus, i.e. the Gospel message or New Covenant, and not stray away from what the Word says. A covenant is a life and death commitment that cannot be broken, even if new circumstances occur.

Chapter Three: This chapter tells us that Jesus is the fulfillment of the religious observances of the Old Testament. Thus, we are no longer saved by keeping the law but by accepting Christ and being baptized by the Holy

Spirit into His blood. Under Moses in the Old Testament, everything had to do with a place. In the New Testament under Christ, everything had to do with a person, JESUS!

Chapter Four: We are not to walk in fear, except in the reverential fear of God only. We are to enter into His rest and to recognize the power of the Word of God. We are to approach the throne of grace confidently because we have a High Priest, full of grace and mercy in our time of need.

Chapter Five: This chapter deals with Jesus, who was PROPHET, PRIEST AND KING, in His priestly office. Jesus was unique in that He was both the priest and the sacrifice. Also, the writer laments the fact that many have not matured and are unable to teach others because they have remained spiritual infants and still need milk, or the elementary principles of God's Word.

Chapter Six: Chapter Six has to do with going on to maturity and not falling away. This chapter also takes a look at Melchisedek, one of the most mysterious figures in the bible. This look at Melchisedek continues in Chapter Seven.

Melchizedek's Priesthood Like Christ's

7 *For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham as he returned from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him,* ***2*** *and Abraham gave him a tenth of all [the spoil]. He is, first of all, by the translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, which means king of peace.* ***3*** *Without [any record of] father or mother, nor ancestral line, without*

[any record of] beginning of days (birth) nor ending of life (death), but having been made like the Son of God, he remains a priest without interruption and without successor.
4 *Now pause and consider how great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the spoils.* ***5*** *It is true that those descendants of Levi who are charged with the priestly office are commanded in the Law to collect tithes from the people—which means, from their kinsmen—though these have descended from Abraham.* ***6*** *But this person [Melchizedek] who is not from their Levitical ancestry received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who possessed the promises [of God].* ***7*** *Yet it is beyond all dispute that the lesser person is always blessed by the greater one.* ***8*** *Furthermore, here [in the Levitical priesthood] tithes are received by men who are subject to death; but in that case [concerning Melchizedek], they are received by one of whom it is testified that he [lives on [perpetually].* ***9*** *A person might even say that Levi [the father of the priestly tribe] himself, who received tithes, paid tithes through Abraham [the father of all Israel and of all who believe],* ***10*** *for Levi was still in the loins (unborn) of his forefather [Abraham] when Melchizedek met him (Abraham).*
11 *Now if perfection [a perfect fellowship between God and the worshiper] had been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people were given the Law) what further need was there for another and different kind of priest to arise, one in the manner of Melchizedek, rather than one appointed to the order of Aaron?* ***12*** *For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is of necessity a*

change of the law [concerning the priesthood] as well.
13 *For the One of whom these things are said belonged [not to the priestly line of Levi but] to another tribe, from which no one has officiated or served at the altar.* ***14*** *For it is evident that our Lord descended from [the tribe of] Judah, and Moses mentioned nothing about priests in connection with that tribe.* ***15*** *And this becomes even more evident if another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek,* ***16*** *who has become a priest, not on the basis of a [physical and legal requirement in the Law [concerning his ancestry as a descendant of Levi], but on the basis of the power of an indestructible and endless life.*
17 *For it is attested [by God] of Him,*
“You (Christ) are a Priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek.”
18 *For, on the one hand, a former commandment is cancelled because of its weakness and uselessness [because of its inability to justify the sinner before God]* ***19*** *(for the Law never made anything perfect); while on the other hand a better hope is introduced through which we now continually draw near to God.* ***20*** *And indeed it was not without the taking of an oath [that Christ was made priest]*
21 *(for those Levites who formerly became priests [received their office] without [its being confirmed by the taking of] an oath, but this One [was designated] with an oath through the One who said to Him,*
“The Lord has sworn
And will not change His mind or regret it,
‘You (Christ) are a Priest forever’”).
22 *And so [because of the oath’s greater strength and force] Jesus has become the certain guarantee of a better*

covenant [a more excellent and more advantageous agreement; one that will never be replaced or annulled].
23 *The [former successive line of] priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were each prevented by death from continuing [perpetually in office];* ***24*** *but, on the other hand, Jesus holds His priesthood permanently and without cha*nge, because *He lives on forever.* ***25*** *Therefore He is able also to save forever (completely, perfectly, for eternity) those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to intercede and intervene on their behalf [with God].*
26 *It was fitting for us to have such a High Priest [perfectly adapted to our needs], holy, blameless, unstained [by sin], separated from sinners and exalted higher than the heavens;* ***27*** *who has no day by day need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices, first of all for his own [personal] sins and then for those of the people, because He [met all the requirements and] did this once for all when He offered up Himself [as a willing sacrifice].* ***28*** *For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak [frail, sinful, dying men], but the word of the oath [of God], which came after [the institution of] the Law, permanently appoints [as priest] a Son who has been made perfect forever.* AMP

We have looked at this most mysterious man of the Old Testament and had a wonderful teaching by Justin Harmon on the identity of Melchizedek, sometimes spelled Melchisedec. I want to quote, in its entirety what Herbert Lockyer says of this man: *"Although a mysterious figure, Melchisedec is yet a figure of great importance. His biography is short. He comes before us in history (Genesis 14); in prophecy (Psalm 110); in doctrine (Hebrews 7), and*

prefigures Christ's priesthood. He is King of Righteousness and King of Peace-cause and effect. Christ alone can bring us peace since He is our righteousness (Isaiah 32:17). In a book consisting of genealogies, Melchisedec has no record of father, mother, birth or death. Such silence is part of the divine plan to make him typify more strikingly the mystery of Christ's birth and the eternity of His priesthood.

The priesthood of this mysterious man was not based on what he was, or any other inherited right. Christ was without father on earth as to His humanity and without mother as to His deity. He was the only-begotten of the Father and without pedigree as to His priesthood. The greatness of Melchisedec is seen in that Abraham gave him tithes and was blessed of him. Christ being greater, deserves and demands our all.

In Christ we have an unchallengeable priesthood, for He was made Priest by the solemnity of a divine oath. His is also an uninterrupted priesthood, for death cannot overtake Him. His priesthood is likewise nontransferable-it cannot be delegated to anyone on earth. Christ, like Melchisedec, had in His office as Priest, no ancestor, no associate, no descendant. With the Aaronic priesthood it was different."

Melchizedec's name means *King of Righteousness.* Tradition identifies him as Shem, the son of Noah (Genesis 11:11) or as Philitis, the builder of the great Pyramid of Egypt. Others believe Melchizedec was Adam. Some believe he was an ordinary man who was the priest-king of ancient Salem. Still others have suggested that Melchizedec is the Father God or the Holy Spirit. I personally believe that Melchizedec is the pre-incarnate

Christ or Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

At any rate, Melchizedek is probably the most mysterious figure in the whole Bible. As a review from Chapter 6, I will give to you ten facts about Melchizedek from Finis Dake:

a. King of Salem, ancient Jerusalem (Genesis 14:18)
b. Priest of God in Abraham's day (Genesis 14:18)
c. Met Abraham returning from his military victory (Genesis 14:16-18
d. Abraham gave him a tenth of the spoils (Genesis 14:16-24)
e. Called King of righteousness (Hebrews 7:2)
f. Called King of Salem or King of Peace (Genesis 14:18)
g. Had no recorded descent, no recorded father or mother, no recorded birth or death (Hebrews 7:3)
h. Made a type of Christ so that Christ could be made a priest after his order (Hebrews 5:6; 7:1-10; 7:15-21)
i. He was an ordinary man (Hebrews 7:4)
j. Greater than Abraham (Verse 7:4-7)

<u>Who is Melchizedek?</u>

In his excellent book *The Order of Melchizedek,* Dr. Francis Myles gives four possibilities of this mysterious man:

1. The First Adam
2. Shem, the son of Noah
3. The priest-king of ancient Salem
4. The pre-incarnation appearance of Christ.

According to Dr. Myles, the reason people say he was Adam is because Melchizedek had no earthly genealogy since he was the first man. Myles says that he could not be Adam because Adam fell and was thus not the King of Righteous. Also, Adam died and Melchizedek did not.

Shem was a priest and king and the son of Noah and tradition says this was Melchizedek. Shem, however, had a genealogy, and he would have had to be very old if he lived in the time of Abram. Furthermore, the Bible tells us that Shem died.

The third possibility also is not plausible since every human born of a woman is born into sin. Also, if the priest-king of ancient Salem had been a mortal and Melchizedek, he would have been the best candidate to be the father of many nations, instead of Abraham.

Myles concludes that Melchizedek has to be Christ Jesus manifesting Himself in bodily form to Abram before the virgin birth. Indeed, even Jesus said in John 8:56, "Abraham saw my day." Melchizedek literally means *King over the whole domain of righteousness.* We know that our righteousness is as filthy rags, so only Jesus could qualify as the *King of Righteousness.*

Melchizedek brought bread and wine. Jesus Himself said, "*I am the **bread** of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."* (John 6:35) And in Matthew 26:27-28 he says: *And he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it.*

He gave it to them and said, "Each of you drink from it, for this is my blood, which confirms the covenant between God and his people. It is poured out as a sacrifice to forgive the sins of many.

Barclay says we cannot understand Chapter 7 of Hebrews without some understanding of the whole priesthood system of the Jews. The basic, starting idea is that religion is man's way of getting access to God. In the Old Testament people had to follow very detail and intricate laws, and one violation of any small detail of the law meant that a person was guilty and estranged from God. As long as men and women were faithfully trying to keep the whole of the law, they could have fellowship with a holy God. But if they violated any part of the law, that access was denied. Since no one could really keep all of the law, priests were appointed to supervise a complex sacrificial system, which served as a bridge back to God, the priest being the bridge builder and the sacrifice being the bridge.

The reality of the situation, however, was that no priest and no sacrifice could really restore the estranged relationship of the believer and God. The writer of Hebrews is arguing that there needs to be a new and different priesthood and a new and different sacrifice. Both of these are found in the atoning death of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection. He paid the sacrifice and is *a priest forever after the order of Melchizedec* (Psalm 110:4).

Barclay summaries the points of why he thinks that Jesus is that Melchizedec:

a. Jesus is the high priest, whose priesthood depends not on any genealogy but on Himself alone.
b. Jesus is the high priest who lives forever.

c. Jesus is the high priest who Himself is sinless and never needs to offer any sacrifice for His own sins.

d. Jesus is the high priest who, in offering Himself, made the perfect sacrifice which once and for all opened the way to God. No more sacrifice need be made.

The whole Jewish priesthood was passed on genealogy. A person who desired to be a priest must trace his lineage back to Aaron. Personal characteristics of the person played no part in this at all. Jesus was not a Levite but was from the tribe of Judah. Therefore, legally He did not qualify for the priesthood. Yet Jesus was the true priest, not because of what He inherited but because of who and what He was.

Why all the information about Melchizedek and the emphasis on him in the book of Hebrews? The answer is simple: In Biblical days only descendants of Aaron could be priests. Jesus was not descended from Aaron so the Jews would not accept Him. The writer of Hebrews, however, tells the Jews something they had long forgot. He reminds them of Melchizedek who was chosen by God centuries before Aaron was born and also chosen by God. Melchizedek, although not a Levite or descendant of Aaron, was considered the greatest of the priests, ever in Jewish history.

The writer to Hebrews has proven that Jesus was the perfect high priest. But not only was He the perfect high priest, He was the perfect sacrifice who alone can open the way to God.