

## OUR GREAT PRIEST

(Hebrews 7:1-8:5)

### DAY ONE READING AND QUESTIONS:

<sup>1</sup>This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, <sup>2</sup>and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name means “king of righteousness”; then also, “king of Salem” means “king of peace.” <sup>3</sup>Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever.

<sup>4</sup>Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! <sup>5</sup>Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people—that is, their brothers—even though their brothers are descended from Abraham. <sup>6</sup>This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. <sup>7</sup>And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater. <sup>8</sup>In the one case, the tenth is collected by men who die; but in the other case, by him who is declared to be living. <sup>9</sup>One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham, <sup>10</sup>because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor.

1. Read the Melchizedek story in Genesis 14:18-20. Is Melchizedek a major character in the Old Testament? Why does Hebrews emphasize him so much?
2. Did Melchizedek literally have no mother or father? If he did, what does “without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life” mean?
3. How does this passage make Melchizedek’s priesthood greater than the Levitical priesthood?

### DAY TWO READING AND QUESTIONS:

<sup>11</sup>If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come—one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? <sup>12</sup>For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law. <sup>13</sup>He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. <sup>14</sup>For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. <sup>15</sup>And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, <sup>16</sup>one who 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. <sup>17</sup>For it is declared:

“You are a priest forever,  
in the order of Melchizedek.”

<sup>18</sup>The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless <sup>19</sup>(for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.

1. *What does it mean that there is a change of the law? In Christ, are we under a law? If so, how is it different from the old law?*
2. *Why is the former law or regulation weak and useless? Does this mean that God gave Israel a bad law?*
3. *Why is our hope a better hope than what they had under the old law?*

**DAY THREE READING AND QUESTIONS:**

<sup>20</sup>And it was not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath, <sup>21</sup>but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him:

“The Lord has sworn  
and will not change his mind:  
‘You are a priest forever.’”

<sup>22</sup>Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

<sup>23</sup>Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; <sup>24</sup>but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. <sup>25</sup>Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

<sup>26</sup>Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. <sup>27</sup>Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. <sup>28</sup>For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

1. *Name three ways that Jesus has a better priesthood than the Levitical priests, according to this passage.*
2. *How does Jesus make intercession for us? Why do we need this so much?*
3. *What does it mean that Jesus is “set apart from sinners”? Don’t we need Jesus to be near us as sinners?*

**DAY FOUR READING AND QUESTIONS:**

<sup>1</sup>The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, <sup>2</sup>and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man.

<sup>3</sup>Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer. <sup>4</sup>If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already men who offer the gifts prescribed by the law. <sup>5</sup>They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: “See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.”

1. *Why is it significant that Jesus serves in the true tabernacle, not the copy?*
2. *What sacrifice does Jesus have to offer?*
3. *Why is it important that Jesus is at the right hand of God and not on the earth?*

## DAY FIVE READING AND QUESTIONS:

Go back and read the entire passage.

1. *Why does Hebrews use such obscure ideas like Melchizedek, priesthood, and tabernacle to make his point? Do you have trouble identifying with these words?*
2. *How does this section fit with the one before it (Hebrews 6:4-20)? What is the major theme of both sections?*
3. *What does a high priest do? Why do we need one? How is Jesus our High Priest?*

## MEDITATION ON HEBREWS 7:1-8:5

Having a priest is a strange idea to me. "Priest" smacks of ritual, religion, and magic. Having to go through a priest to get to God doesn't sound very democratic. I've always been taught that we don't need a priest to go to God for us. We can approach God for ourselves.

What an arrogant notion, that we can approach God for ourselves! Do we really think we can stand before the Almighty, the Holy One, and be proud of who we are? Surely we know better. We are limited. Human. Finite. Broken. Sinful. Confused.

Who can stand before God?

We can. But not on our own. We need a priest who stands there for us and with us. We need one who takes care of our sins, heals our brokenness, and saves us completely. We need one to intercede. We need one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

The great and good news is that we have such a priest. All that we read here of oaths, tabernacles, patterns, and Melchizedek is to impress upon us the great gift God has given us in Jesus. He is our powerful High Priest, who sits at God's right hand to put in a good word for us. We can stand boldly before our God not because of what we are or what we have done, but because of what Jesus is and what he has done.

This is our better hope, a hope not in ourselves, but in our Savior.

"Lord Jesus, we thank and praise you as our great High Priest. May we rely not on ourselves, but on you."