

Session 1

Hello and welcome.

The New Testament book, Hebrews, has been an encouragement to Christians for 2000 years. Join me over the next four sessions as we explore Hebrews, chapters six through nine.

First – a reminder of the background on Hebrews.

Written about 70 years after Christ's death and resurrection. Written to First century Christians who came from Jewish backgrounds.

Written because these first century Christians were discouraged. Christ has been gone for more than 50 years and some Christians are losing hope. Their entire history and almost certainly all family are Jewish; many sects spinning off teaching "Christ" but in ways that are only half-true; **Christians are being persecuted throughout the roman empire from Rome to Jerusalem so "remaining Jewish" could protect them from persecution.**

Judaism, the religion of their birth, was not a second-rate religion. It was divinely designed, expressing true devotion and worship of God. **And, it was familiar and convenient.** Many of those who accepted Christ still longed for Judaism's familiar routines and lived a kind of hybrid faith. The commandments, rituals, celebrations, and the promises described by God's prophets revealed the way to forgiveness and salvation.

Are current day Christians similar to those first century Christians? The events of the last year, as well as the persecution of Christians outside the U.S. and the scorn of Christians within the U.S. are enough to make the weakhearted fall into doubt and despair, instead of being steadfast in faith.

Gist of this letter:

Jesus is better. Christ is supreme and completely sufficient for salvation. He is the perfect revelation and reflection of God, the complete sacrifice for sin, the compassionate and understanding mediator, and the only way to eternal life.

Christ is my only security in a changing world.

Start today with a couple of personal questions.

Q: Who are you? Example: I am a father, son, husband, employer, employee, etc.

Q: At your job, what is your title? By whose authority? Who gave you that title?

Q: What does your job entail? What are your major duties?

Let's apply these same questions to Jesus.

Q: Who is Jesus? Mary and Joseph's son, teacher, carpenter, God's only son.

Q: What is his **current** title? High Priest

Q: By whose authority? Who gave him that title? God – and furthermore with an oath.

Q: What does that job entail? What is his major duty? Intercession

The letter to the Hebrews through chapter 5 has been explaining who Jesus is. Now it is refining that message by explaining his authority and what that means.

Okay, this is going to seem strange since I just told you that we were covering chapters 6-9, but I want to begin with chapter 5 which leads us to chapter 7, and we'll come back to 6. But first, strangely, I need to back up to Chapter 4 as it sets the stage for what we read in Chapter 5. Remember the first word of Chapters three and four? "Therefore..." This word is used repeatedly throughout Hebrews.

Chapter 3 starts with, "Therefore, fix your thoughts of Jesus our high priest."

Chapter 4 begins, "Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, ..."

And in C4V14 we read:

Therefore, *since* we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, ***let us hold firmly to*** the ***faith*** we profess.

Twice now the audience has heard these words about Jesus as High Priest. They know what the High Priest means. That is not a generic title, but has very special meaning in Judaism. Only the High Priest can enter the Holy of Holies, make sacrifices to God for the sins of the people of Israel, and he can only do that once per year. So, calling Jesus the high priest is not lost on them.

Chapter 4 continues as follows:

15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—**yet he did not sin.** 16 ***Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.***

Here again, these people know that having Jesus as high priest has changed everything. Here they are reminded that Jesus, a human being, a descendant of Abraham, lived a sin-free life. No one else has ever done that. Jesus didn't need a high priest to make sacrifices for him. AND – then, they are told something unheard of, "Let us approach God's throne..." Approaching God is unheard of prior to Christ's fulfilling the law.

As a first century believer, they might have trouble believing this so the author offers supporting information as follows: **READ C5V1-10**

Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2 He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. 3 This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. 4 And no one takes this honor on himself, but he receives it when called by God, just as Aaron was.

5 In the same way, Christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him,

"You are my Son; today I have become your Father."

6 And he says in another place,

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

7 During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. 8 Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered 9 and, **once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him 10 and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.**

Q: By whose authority do priests get their titles and perform their duties? God. Except, at the time of this letter, Rome was selecting the high priest in Jerusalem.

Q: Do priests sin? Of course.

Q: Who makes sacrifices for the sins of the priests? Stay tuned. This is answered in verses coming up.

Q: By whose authority was Jesus appointed as priest? Like Aaron, Jesus is called by God. There’s a problem though. God already decided 2000 years ago that only descendants of Aaron would be priests, and Jesus isn’t in that lineage. Jesus is from the line of Judah.

Q: How do we reconcile this confusion? [We’ll see in a moment in C7 – Melchizedek predates Aaron]

Before going there, I want to point out several things in C5VV 7-10.

V7 mentions “fervent cries and tears” – Four days before Christ’s death and resurrection, Jesus showed himself to be just like us; desperately crying out to God. **[READ Luke 22:41-44]**

41 He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, 42 “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” 43 An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. 44 And being **in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.**

I don’t know about you, but even in my most fervent prayers, I never prayed like this.

VV8-10 – Though he was God’s only son, he suffered, and this seems to say that it was through this suffering that he learned obedience, and also through this was made perfect. And, it is because of his obedience and perfection that he is “the source of eternal salvation.”

V10 ends with something that hints to the answer to God’s appointing Jesus as a priest even though he is not a Levite.

Q: What is it that he says that helps us understand this? “order of M”

Just a hint unless you know who M is and what this “Order” is. **Let’s jump to Chapter 7**

READ 7:VV1-4

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, 2 and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything.

First, the name Melchizedek means “king of righteousness”; then also, “king of Salem” means “king of peace.” 3 Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever.

4 Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder!

Who was this guy? Some believe that he was an early incarnation of Jesus, but these verses refute that in that M still lives and functions as a priest, and we just learned that Jesus also lives and serves as High Priest, therefore they both are alive and serving as two unique individuals.

READ Vv 13-17;

He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. 14 For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. 15 And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, 16 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.** 17 For it is declared:

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

V13 makes it clear that Jesus came from a tribe that NEVER served as priests.

AND

v16 explains why Jesus can be a priest when it states, “...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.”

READ Vv 7:20-22 I mentioned in the beginning that Jesus was given the title of High Priest by God – with an oath. It’s in these verses that we see that oath declared.

20 And it was not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath, 21 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.’”

22 Because of this oath, Jesus has become the **guarantor of a better covenant.**

Then verse 24 tells us that, “...because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood.”

Let’s wrap this up by reading 7:25-28.

READ Vv 7:25 – 28

25 Therefore he is able to **save completely** those who come to God through him, because **he always lives to intercede for them.**

26 Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

28 For the law appoints as high priests men in all their weakness; **but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.**

One final point as we wrap up today's video lesson: Remember the question, "What is Jesus' role? His duties as High Priest?" V25 tells us apart of that role which is "to intercede for them." Who is them? US!!! "those who came to God through him"

SUMMARY

Jesus is the Son of God, and was given a Title by God himself, High Priest. Best of all, that role is an eternal role that provides a "source of eternal salvation" as well as eternal intercession for US! As I face the joys and challenges of life, I can think of nothing that gives me more comfort than the knowledge found in 7:25 that **Jesus is eternally interceding for me.**

Close with a quote from John Piper.

"The Bible was not written as a self-help book, or a guide to our mental health. Though you may find help from it, the Bible was written to explain to us about the **massive holiness of God.**"