

Only Jesus Saves
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Hebrews 7:23-28

Opening discussion: **What are some examples of when someone “vouches” or “goes to bat” for us with someone else? Why would you ever need someone to play that role on your behalf? What would qualify someone to “vouch” for you with someone else?**

Big Idea: Jesus is the only Priest I’ll ever need, because He’s the only Savior I’ll ever need!

When we started our study of Hebrews we said simply this book is all about Jesus. This morning’s lesson is certainly all about Him. But I would be remiss to begin with verse 23 and not acknowledge the first part of chapter seven. We need to understand that the writer of Hebrews drew a contrast for why Jesus is superior to human high priests and how He is different.

We also need a working knowledge of a mysterious Bible character named Melchizedek.

- Some of you have no doubt studied ahead. **What do you know about Melchizedek?**
- The first mention of Melchizedek is in Genesis 14:18–20, then again in Psalm 110:4.
- The first few verses of chapter seven of Hebrews ties it all together. Reading in the NLT:

Hebrews 7:1–23 (NLT)

This Melchizedek was king of the city of Salem and also a priest of God Most High. When Abraham was returning home after winning a great battle against the kings, Melchizedek met him and blessed him. 2 Then Abraham took a tenth of all he had captured in battle and gave it to Melchizedek. The name Melchizedek means “king of justice,” and king of Salem means “king of peace.” 3 There is no record of his father or mother or any of his ancestors—no beginning or end to his life. He remains a priest forever, resembling the Son of God.

- **Verses one and two: What two things happened between Melchizedek and Abraham?**
- **Verse seven: Why does the writer argue that Melchizedek was greater than Abraham, the great patriarch of Israel? Verse eight: Why was Melchizedek greater than all the human priests down through Old Testament times?**

7 And without question, the person who has the power to give a blessing is greater than the one who is blessed. (The writer goes on to say in verse eight...)

8 The priests who collect tithes are men who die, so Melchizedek is greater than they are, because we are told that he lives on.

- **Look back at verse three: how does verse three teach that Melchizedek “lives on?”**
- Melchizedek represents a picture of a “forever” priest.
- **Verse two: Not only was Melchizedek a priest, what kind of “king” was he?**
- **Based on all this, in what ways is Jesus like Melchizedek?**
- The writer continues in verses 11-14 to explain that the Old Testament priesthood needed to be replaced by a new and better priesthood. Not to “fix” but to “perfect” the old system.

15 This change has been made very clear since a different priest, who is like Melchizedek, has appeared. 16 Jesus became a priest, not by meeting the physical requirement of belonging to

the tribe of Levi, but by the power of a life that cannot be destroyed. 17 And the psalmist pointed this out when he prophesied,

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

18 Yes, the old requirement about the priesthood was set aside because it was weak and useless. 19 For the law never made anything perfect. But now we have confidence in a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

20 This new system was established with a solemn oath. Aaron’s descendants became priests without such an oath, 21 but there was an oath regarding Jesus. For God said to him,

“The Lord has taken an oath and will not break his vow:

‘You are a priest forever.’ ”*

22 Because of this oath, Jesus is the one who guarantees this better covenant with God.

- Verse 15 says Jesus is like Melchizedek. Melchizedek was a “symbol or picture of Christ.”
- Now that you know about Melchizedek, let’s talk about Jesus, our GREAT high priest.
- Verse 19 says Jesus gives us “confidence in a better hope” to “draw near to God.”
- Verse 22: I’d underline the words: “Jesus...guarantees this better covenant with God.”
- Beginning in verse 23, we see why Jesus eliminated the need for human priests.

Hebrews 7:23–28 (ESV)

23 The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, 24 but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever.

25 Consequently, 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.

26 For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. 27 He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. 28 For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

- Let’s revisit something. **Why were priests needed in Old Testament times?**
- **What would have happened if any of the people—priests included—ever tried to encounter God’s presence improperly?**
- Let’s do some observation in verses 23 through 27. **How is Jesus different than human high priests? Verses 23 & 24? Verses 26 & 27?**
- Verse 25 addresses the most SIGNIFICANT way Jesus is superior to human priests.
- In verse 25: **What makes Jesus our POWERFUL HIGH PRIEST? How is He our FOREVER HIGH PRIEST?**
- **In what ways is Jesus “vouching” or “going to bat” for us as He makes intercession?**
- Look at Romans 8:33-34. The Apostle Paul talks about the intercessory work of Jesus:

Romans 8:33–34 (ESV)

33 Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

- But Jesus ISN’T arguing for our salvation...He already accomplished that on the cross!

William R. Newell wrote:

“Our blessed Lord is interceding for us, but He is in no sense appeasing God. All that God’s holy Being and righteous government could demand was once for all, completely and forever, satisfied at the Cross.”

Dave Guzik in his commentary put it this way:

“Jesus’ intercession on our behalf is not a matter of placating an angry Father who wants to destroy us. It is not a matter of continually chanting prayers on behalf of His people. It means that He continually represents us before the Father so that we can draw near through Him, and that He defends us against Satan’s accusations and attacks.”

- Verse 26 says it is “indeed fitting” we should have such a high priest. **Is it “fitting” because we deserve Him? How is it Jesus the “perfect fit” for our predicament as sinful people?**
- Jesus is “fitting” as our high priest because of our great NEED.
- **Verses 26-28: In what ways is Jesus SUPERIOR to the former human high priests?**
- **Why was it crucial to God’s plan for us, for Jesus to have these characteristics?**
- **Think of the most godly person you’ve ever known in your life. Do you have a mental picture of them? No matter how godly they are or were, what’s the problem with depending on them for spiritual guidance and support?**
- **Why does Jesus being our great High Priest matter to you and me this week? Why does it matter WHO JESUS IS; WHERE JESUS IS; and WHAT JESUS IS DOING for us?**
- **How do these verses encourage you? Why would they move you to worship God?**

So, What’s the Takeaway?

Alexander Maclaren wrote:

“Men come and go. Leaders, teachers, thinkers, speak and work for a season, and then fall silent and impotent. He abides. They die, but He lives. They are lights kindled, and therefore, sooner or later quenched, but He is the true Light from which they draw all their brightness, and He shines for evermore.”

Hardman, S. G., & Moody, D. L. (1997). Thoughts for the quiet hour. Willow Grove, PA: Woodlawn Electronic Publishing.

- God provided the Old Testament system of sacrifices and priests as an act of mercy, so sinful people could approach Him. But in His perfect timing He had a better plan all along.
- That plan was Jesus as our ULTIMATE High Priest!
- He is our forever High Priest - therefore He saves us forever.
- He is our holy, sinless, and separated High priest - the pure sacrifice we needed.
- He is our exalted High Priest - representing us at the right hand of God the Father.
- He is our perfect High Priest - the perfect solution to our sinful condition.
- He is our powerful High Priest - the ONLY ONE with the POWER to save us “to the uttermost” and give us eternal life forever.
- How does knowing all this make you feel? We often sing a worship song with these lyrics:

When I Think About The Lord

When I think about the Lord
How He saved me how He raised me
How He filled me with the Holy Ghost
How He healed me to the uttermost
When I think about the Lord

How He picked me up and turned me around
How He placed my feet on solid ground

It makes me wanna shout
Hallelujah thank You Jesus
Lord You're worthy of all the glory
And all the honor and all the praise
It makes me wanna shout
Hallelujah thank You Jesus
Lord You're worthy of all the glory
And all the honor and all the praise

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- Doesn't it make you want to SHOUT HALLELUJAH? Oh, what a Savior and High Priest we have!