

➤ **Read Hebrews 7:1–10.**

Hebrews chapter six ends with a quote from Psalm 110:4, which the writer has repeated three times thus far: “Jesus...has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek” (6:20; 5:6, 10). There is little mention of Melchizedek in Scripture; he remains a rather mysterious Old Testament character. Yet, his significance far outweighs his lack of mention, for the writer sees in him a picture of Jesus.

1. Skim the account of the meeting between Abram (that is, Abraham, the father of God’s covenant people, Israel) and Melchizedek in Genesis 14:1–20. The author of Hebrews tells us to “just think how great [Melchizedek] was” (v. 4). With this in mind list facts about Melchizedek from both Genesis and Hebrews. (vv. 1–3; Gen. 14:17–20)

What, if anything, strikes you about Melchizedek at first glance?

2. In what two ways is Melchizedek identified? (v. 1a; Gen. 14:18)
3. For the recipients of this letter, “names were significant, because it was accepted that names denoted the nature as well as the identity of the person.”<sup>1</sup>
  - a. Fill in the blanks below. (v. 2)

Melchizedek means \_\_\_\_\_.

King of Salem means \_\_\_\_\_.

- b. How do these meanings point to Jesus?

Righteousness (Heb 1:8–9; Is. 9:6–7; 1 Jn. 2:1)

Peace (Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:17–18)

c. What are some of the fruits of the righteousness and peace of Jesus for those who believe in him?

Righteousness (Is. 32:17; Phil. 3:7-9)

Peace (Jn. 14:27; Phil. 4:7)

d. How have you experienced the righteousness and peace of Jesus?

4. Melchizedek's other role as "priest of God Most High" (v. 1a) is of particular interest to the writer. What qualified a man to become a priest in ancient Israel? (Heb. 5:4; 7:5; Num.18:1-2, 6-7)

### *Levitical Priesthood*

The priesthood in ancient Israel was based on heredity. A priest had to be a descendant of Aaron, the first high priest of Israel (Exod. 28-29). The term "Levitical" refers to Levi, one of Jacob's twelve sons and patriarch of the tribe of Levi from which Aaron and his brother Moses were descendants.

5. In verse 3, what important information about Melchizedek does the writer say is missing?

Melchizedek is without \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_

without \_\_\_\_\_

without \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_

How does all of this make Melchizedek different from the priests descended from Levi?

### *A Priest Forever*

"Melchizedek is introduced into the story of Abraham, as a 'priest of God most high', but without any mention being made of *where he got his priesthood from*, more particularly of whether he obtained it by inheritance from his family. Nor is there any mention of his priesthood starting or finishing with birth or death. It is as though, in the story, he is just there, as something of a permanent fixture... Jesus' high priesthood does not depend on being born into a priestly family, and... his priesthood, unlike that of the Levitical priests, continues uninterrupted to the present time."<sup>2</sup>

How does Melchizedek foreshadow the Son of God? (v. 3; Heb. 7:24-25)

6. The writer of Hebrews contrasts the Levitical priesthood and the priesthood “in the order of Melchizedek” (6:20) in verses 4–10.
  - a. Abraham, the ancestor of Levi, is called “him who had the promises” (v. 6). To what promises is the writer referring? (Gen. 12:2–4)
  - b. For the readers of Hebrews, Abraham is the highly revered patriarch of the nation of Israel. Why is it significant that Melchizedek blesses Abraham? (vv. 1b, 6–7; Gen. 14:18–20a)
  - c. Abraham gives Melchizedek a tithe, a tenth of all the spoils of his victory. What surprising conclusion does the writer come to? (vv. 9–10)
  - d. What point do you think he is trying to make?
7. This week’s passage has developed the idea of Jesus’ role as “a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 6:20). Even though this may seem like abstract theology, it has practical implications that the writer has been stressing all along. Scan back through Hebrews 1–6 and write in a few sentences what you have learned so far about Jesus our High Priest.

How will this change the way you live day to day?

<sup>1</sup> Donald Guthrie, *Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, ed. Leon Morris, vol. 15 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 159.

<sup>2</sup> N. T. Wright, *Hebrews for Everyone* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 72.