

Hebrews Chapter 7 - John Karmelich

1. My lesson title is, "Why should I trust Jesus as my priest when I got this guy right next to me?" To explain that title, we need to return to the issue of Jesus as our High Priest. But John, didn't we beat that point to death a few lessons back? ☺ Why return to it?
 - a) For the Jewish audience that Hebrews was originally intended for, they had a system of priests whose job it was to help people draw closer to God. They also knew Jesus was not part of that group of priests. Therefore it was a difficult concept for them to see Jesus as someone they could turn too, when they already had priests everywhere for help.
 - b) For the Christian, we may have our own pastors or priests or even a close friend who we consider to be close to God. The point is why should I trust Jesus to be my "High Priest" when I got this other person who I already have a personal relationship with?
 - c) Let me also talk about this question in the perspective of the last lesson. In the last lesson I talked about how to be a mature Christian. I talked about how in the New Testament Paul worked hard for the rest of his life making a difference for Jesus after he was saved.
 - i) The question in effect is, if we are going to make a difference for Jesus, how exactly do we do that? Do we just ask to our "priest" for guidance? Do we just keep on reading these studies and look for guidance here? The point is not to put down our religious friends or even this ministry. The point is that Jesus Himself is more than willing to guide us to do what God the Father desires of each of us. He is our power source to do what God calls us to do. He is willing to guide us to make that difference to guide our lives for Him.
 - d) If that is true, then why have priests? Should I end my relationship with those "priests" I am close to? Of course not. It is the job function of all Christians to help others to draw close to Him. God wants all of us to help each other know Him and draw close to Him.
 - i) Therefore, the underlying point of this whole lesson is not just to understand why Jesus is our high priest, but also to understand the function and role of Jesus as our High Priest and how that differs and compares to "the guy standing next to me?"
2. I say all of this because in this chapter, the author explains why even though Jesus was not born among this group of people designated to be priests, He still is a priest based in effect upon God the Father's ordination of another priest long before the Jewish system of priests was put in place.
 - a) If you recall from a few lessons back, I gave a silly illustration about a man named the United States who had fifty children, and each child was assigned a section of land. All the descendants of each of those fifty children lived in the specific land are assigned to each of them. God told one of those children, "You are not to have your own territory, but you are to be scattered through the territory of the other children to be their priests."
 - i) That is what God did with a specific group of Israelites called the Levites. All the other Israelites had their own specific territory. The Levites did not have their own land, but were to be scattered among the other Israelites to be the priests.
 - b) The related point is Jesus was not from this tribe of Levi. When Jesus came into our world via, Mary, her ancestors and the ancestors of Joseph, who legally adopted Jesus as part of his family were both of the tribe of Judah. Those Jewish people who accepted Jesus as the Son of God knew this fact about Jesus and His background. The writer of Hebrews wants to make the case that Jesus was a priest even though he was not of the tribe of Levi.
 - i) OK John, we know this from studying our bible and know this from you beating it over our heads in earlier lessons on Hebrews. ☺ Why is that issue brought up again, here in Chapter 7? The answer is for us to understand the function and role of Jesus as our High Priest. In effect, the question becomes, how do we draw on His power to make a difference in the world? That is what Hebrews Chapter 7 is all about. With that said, I can now start Verse 1.

3. Hebrews Chapter 7, Verse 1: 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, his name means "king of righteousness"; then also, "king of Salem" means "king of peace."
- a) The first thing we read of is a man named Melchizedek who was the king of Salem. I talked about him back in Chapter 5. To refresh our memories, let me explain again briefly who he was, and then I'll talk about why the writer of Hebrews brings him up again here.
 - b) This man named Melchizedek is only mentioned in a few verses in Genesis Chapter 14, from Verses 17 through 24. The only other biblical reference to this man in the Old Testament was many centuries later, when David wrote in one of the psalms that the coming eternal king will be a king forever like Melchizedek. The question becomes why does this fairly trivial bible character get so much discussion here in Hebrews?
 - i) The answer is to show the original intended Jewish audience to whom this letter was written that Jesus is part of a designated priesthood, but that priesthood is different than the Levi priesthood of which the Jewish people already knew.
 - ii) Remember that when this was written, there was already a large group of priests all over Israel. Now here the writer of Hebrews trying to tell them and us that not only is Jesus God, not only is He payment for our sins, but He is also our top priest like this Melchizedek character.
 - iii) The effective question becomes, what do we do with other priests if Jesus is our priest? Do we just end our relationship with those other people as we turn to help us draw close to God the Father, if Jesus is our priest? Let me answer:
 - a) Let's face it, Jesus does not talk to us audibly, and our "religious friends" do talk to us. Why and how do I get Jesus to guide my life when I got this guy? That in effect is the key question of this chapter. While I desire to explain that issue through this lesson, first we have to finish discussing who is Melchizedek in order to understand how and why we turn to Jesus as our high priest to guide our lives.
 - c) To explain about Melchizedek, let me review some more what happened in his story back in Genesis 14. Remember that Abraham was the first Jewish person. He was called by God to start the Jewish nation. He was also the great grandfather of the 12 men that did become the 12 tribes of Israel. Before Abraham's first son was ever born, Abraham was involved in a battle between some different tribes where he lived at that time.
 - i) Melchizedek was a king (think of an all powerful mayor) of a city. This man was also the top priest of that same location. One time this king was involved in a war along with several other kings of cities as they battled together against some other kings. Abraham himself along with his own personal army (Abraham was a rich man) fought on the same side of this war as Melchizedek.
 - ii) Genesis 14 says that Abraham's side won that war. Abraham then gave a tenth what he had (probably the war spoils) to Melchizedek. Ok and what does this have to do with Jesus being "the top priest" and my other "priestly friends"?
 - a) The first point to remember is that the one giving 10% is always considered inferior to the one receiving the 10% gift. Whoever Melchizedek was, he was thought of so highly that Abraham gave him 10% of the war spoils. The issue is then why is does Genesis tell that story and why should I care?
 - b) To answer that question, it is important to know what Melchizedek's name means. It means "righteousness". This guy was the king of Salem, which is a shortened version of "JeruSalem". The name of that city means "peace".
 - c) It is also a cute pun in Jewish thought, because God's righteousness (being in good standing with Him) always comes before "God's peace". To have God's peace in our life, first we have to be in "right standing before Him".

- iii) To put this in "Christian speak", we get in right standing before God the Father by trusting in Jesus as complete payment of all of our sins, past present and future. We get God's peace once we accept that concept.
 - a) My point here is simply that one can see how Melchizedek is a model of Jesus in that Melchizedek's name and the city he rules over is a "pun" in that the translation of his name and his cities name represents how God desires us to have peace in our lives.
- d) Also notice Verse 1 ends with the statement that Melchizedek blessed Abraham.
 - i) This is important in Jewish thought in that something greater always blesses something less. Anyone could say I bless you to someone else. In a Jewish way of thinking, the greater in stature always blesses the less in stature.
 - a) The point is to remember that Abraham is considered the father of the Jewish people. Yet here is this trivial character from Genesis named Melchizedek blessing the one who is the father of the Jewish nation.
 - ii) So how did Melchizedek bless him anyway? Great question. If you go back to his story in Genesis 14, Verse 21 says that Melchizedek told Abraham in effect to keep your stuff and give me the men. In other words the blessing was not just empty words, but a physical gift back to Abraham. The 10% of the spoils that Abraham offered to Melchizedek, he turned around and told Abraham to keep it.
 - a) So why did Melchizedek specify that he wanted the men? I suspect that Abraham's fighting men impressed Melchizedek. What I suspect it means symbolically is that just as we belong to Jesus, here was this "type" of Jesus asking that people be given over to Melchizedek.
 - b) I could go on from there with more symbolism, but I've just spent a page and a half on the first two verses, and we have a long way to go.
- 4. Verse 3: Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever.
 - a) When the text says "without father or mother or without genealogy", the point is that when the bible describes Melchizedek, none of his family background is mentioned. There is no mention of how long Melchizedek lived. The only thing the text says in effect about him is that he was a king and the top priest of Jerusalem.
 - i) Does this mean the guy never had parents? Was he an Old Testament appearance of Jesus? Some scholars argue that way, but personally, I find that debate boring in the sense we could never know the answer for sure in this lifetime.
 - ii) The point of the text is that Melchizedek was at the least a "type" of Jesus in that because Genesis does not record when his reign started or finished, it just "goes on". In that sense, the point is that just as Jesus is our high priest forever, so this Melchizedek was in effect a high priest indefinitely as nothing is recorded about how long he was a priest.
 - b) To summarize the whole issue here, the writer of Hebrews is making the point that just because Jesus was not of the priestly tribe of Levi, he was still a priest based on the fact that Genesis records this Melchizedek was a priest and that Abraham, who was the father of the Jewish people paid honor to Melchizedek as a priest.
 - i) One has to remember that Abraham worshipped God alone. In the life story of Abraham in Genesis, there is no record of him honoring anyone but God alone with the exception of this one occasion here with Melchizedek.
 - ii) The point is if the bible takes the time and trouble to show that Abraham honored this Melchizedek guy as someone greater than himself, it must have some biblical significance. That significance is that there is another priesthood that God respects over and above the system of Levites. Think of it this way: God did not punish Abraham for this gesture, so in effect, the act was "God ordained".

5. Verse 4: Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! ⁵ 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.
- a) Before I explain these verses, let us remember the main point: It is to understand the role of Jesus as our high priest in comparison to other priests who are around us. The writer of Hebrews is building a case why Jesus is superior to the other system of priests. The point is to teach us how trusting in Jesus to guide our lives is more important than trusting in the guidance of our priestly friends or even what I write in this lesson.
 - i) With that said, let us return to the story at hand.
 - b) To grasp these verses, one has to understand how much Abraham is respected amongst the Jewish people. He is considered the first person that God spoke to about forming a nation (the Jewish people) to be His witness to the world. Abraham is the father of the Jewish people. Yet in Jewish thought, the "greater" always is superior to the "less" and the less always gives to the greater. Here was Abraham offering a tenth of what he had to this bible trivia character named Melchizedek.
 - c) Now let me explain how that is relevant in Jewish thought here. The whole system of Jewish priests did not come for hundreds of years after Abraham. In fact when this event took place in Genesis 14, Abraham's first son was not born yet.
 - i) Let us suppose God called us to be Jewish priests. Yet, a few hundred years before the system of Jewish priests was in place, our ancestor, who we are convinced was our ancestor, gave 10% of what he had to another priest. In Jewish thought, that makes this Melchizedek priest superior to our system of priests because we are descendants of this man, Abraham.
 - ii) If you recall from my illustration of "the 50 sons of a man named United States" that one of those sons did not get a section of land, but he had to work amongst the land area of the other sons to be their priests. The way that the Levi priests made their living was that all the other Jewish people had to pay 10% of what they earned to this group of Levi priests.
 - iii) The point is if I am a Jew, and I am giving 10% of my income to my local priest, Jesus is superior to that priest in that my ancestor gave 10% of his income to this other priest (Melchizedek) long before my system of priest was ever put into place.
 - iv) OK John, let us assume most of us don't have Jewish backgrounds. What does this mean for you and me? Does God want us to stop giving to our local church and only somehow give to Jesus? No, that's not it. The point is we can still rely on our Christian friends and "priests" to guide us, but because Jesus is superior to our priests, we look to Him first to guide our lives. We are then more than welcome to have our Christian friends help us grow in our trust in Him. The idea is to trust Jesus first, and our own "priests" then our welcome to help us do His will.
 - d) Before I leave these verses, most people wonder about whether or not we should give 10% of our income to priests, so let me comment on that issue here. That 10% giving rule was a Jewish requirement. As Christians we are not under "the law", but we are to trust in Jesus complete payment for our sins and His ability to guide our lives. Christians are called in the New Testament to support causes that further the kingdom of God. I don't believe we are bound by a legal requirement to give exactly 10% of our net income.
 - i) So how much do we give and to whom do we give it? I use the analogy of picking stocks in the stock market: If one is buying stocks, one looks for the stocks that give the best return on one's investment. Therefore, we should look for ministries that we see God is already blessing as that brings a good return on our investment. If one is not sure where to start, I always recommend one's own church. As to how much, that is between you and God. I have personally found that God makes it obvious to me how much to give each week and He always provides for me.

6. Verse 6: This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises.⁷ And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater.⁸ 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.⁹ One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham,¹⁰ because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor.
- a) While I was busy talking discussing giving 10% of our income to our "priests", the writer of Hebrews is still comparing the 10% of the income that those Jewish people give to their priests compared to the fact that Abraham offered 10% of what he had to Melchizedek.
 - b) The main point being made here is the "greater always blesses the less" in Jewish thought, whoever Melchizedek was, he must have been greater than Abraham simply because he offered 10% of his goods to this Melchizedek person.
 - i) This offering by Abraham to Melchizedek was superior to the priestly system that the Jewish people had because the system of Levi priests had not even begun yet, as Abraham did not have any children when he gave this 10% to Melchizedek.
 - c) Ok John, this is all interesting very ancient history. Tell me why I should care? We as Christians give of our resources to our local churches and to other causes that we believe God is leading us to give to. Just as Melchizedek was superior to the Levi priests in that Melchizedek came before them, so Jesus as our high priest is superior to our local "priests" that we turn to in our lives for advice.
 - i) So does this mean I have to somehow give 10% of my income directly to Jesus and not to my local "priests" or some ministry? No that misses the point. Because Jesus is superior to our system of priests we first look to Him to guide our lives and not our local priests. OK, that requires an explanation through an illustration:
 - a) Let us say we are having a problem in some area of our life. Before turning to our "priestly friends" for help, first, God the Father wants us to give Him that issue. It is to pray in effect, "I don't know what I am going to do in this situation, but whatever is the result, I will accept it as Your will. Does that mean I stop trying to fix the problem? Of course not. It just means the results of whatever will happen is now God's problem and not my problem. That is how Jesus is superior to our own system of priests.
 - b) From there, we can turn to others for help. We may ask others to help us through our situation, and that is the role of all Christians as "priests".
 - ii) Think of it this way: God still created the system of Levi priests, even though God the Father wanted the Israelites to trust Him to guide their lives. My point is I'm not putting down any system of priests that seeks to honor the God of the bible. My point is we have this great resource at God the Father's "right hand" that is not only willing to listen to our problems, but is willing to guide us through them. That is how Jesus as our high priest is superior to our own system of priests.
 - iii) So how does Jesus guide us if we don't hear Him speak audibly? It is to study the bible and use that as a guide to how to live our lives. It is to pray for His help and watch the results happen knowing that we have prayed for His help. It is about having other Christians help us just as we offer to help them in order to make a difference for Jesus in this lifetime.
 - d) All of this happy talk does lead me back to these verses. The point is not that the Levi system of priests was wrong. Those Jewish priests were God ordained and they, like Christians today are supposed to help each other grow in our trust of Jesus to guide our lives. The point of these verses is just as there was another "priestly ordination" that existed long before Levite priests first came into place, so Jesus was ordained to be our priest long before any other system of priests was every put into place. Therefore, we don't ignore other priests we just see them in the perspective of Jesus as our top priest.

7. Verse 11: 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?
- a) The key to understanding this verse is to notice the word "perfection". The idea here is that if all one needs to be perfectly forgiven of one's sins is to trust in our local priests, why was this other priest named Melchizedek ever mentioned in the bible?
 - b) In other words, there is nothing wrong with having friends who are "priests" to help us in our Christian life. There is nothing wrong with Jewish system as God set up that system to help the Jewish people draw close to Him. The issue again, is the word perfection.
 - i) Think of it this way: Those priests could help the Jewish people show how God wants to forgive them of their sins. Those priests helped with their sacrifices. Priests today may give us advice on what to do to alleviate the guilt over whatever sin we have committed. The problem is that advice or sacrifice does not make us perfect. We still will have a desire to sin again before we know it.
 - ii) The point is a system of priests like the Jewish priests or even those people with similar titles today in the Christian church are usually a good thing as they may help us draw close to God, but they can never on their own make us perfect.
 - iii) We need Jesus as our priest in order for us to be perfect (i.e., perfectly forgiven).
 - c) OK John, is this just another lecture on the fact we need Jesus for the complete forgiveness of our sins? No it is not. Remember that the issue at hand in the past few chapters is not about salvation, but about maturity as a Christian. Therefore, the issue here is that having Jesus to intercede between God the Father and ourselves is necessary for our lives.
 - i) Let me explain. Even if we trust in Jesus and confess our sins directly to Him, don't we still have to fight the urge to sin again? Of course. Since that is true, how is Jesus any better than our other priests who we trust in? After all, my friend the "priest" can speak to me audibly. I don't get audible messages from Jesus, unless of course I get one of those audible bible series to listen to. ☺
 - ii) So how is Jesus as our priest before God the Father make us perfect if there are other priests that can help us draw close to God? First of all, I would rather talk to the entity that I know is next to God the Father speaking on my behalf then telling my problems to my friend no matter how wonderful a friend they are.
 - iii) OK even if Jesus is a better source than our priests, how does that affect us being perfect (perfectly forgiven) before God the Father? This is the necessity of Jesus as our high priest in order to be perfectly forgiven of our sins. Think of Jesus as the best source we could possibly tap into to guide our lives. As wonderful as the advice could be from any of our devout Christian friends or priests, that source could never be as great as from someone who is right next to God the Father.
 - iv) OK John, you have convinced me that Jesus is a better source to talk to about my issues than my "priestly" friend. How do I actually get His advice? Ask Him. Tell Him your issues even though He already knows all things. Sometimes laying our issues out before Jesus gives us the right perspective on what is the right thing to do next. Often He makes it obvious to us once we have given Him our issues as to what to do next in life. Other times, the answers require time. That is when God is saying to us in effect, "I have an answer for you, but not now". Then is when we must trust Him through whatever situation we are dealing with at the moment.
 - v) Let me end this long discussion this way: When we turn to Jesus as our priest, we know we can be perfectly forgiven. With the system of human priests, they can help us draw close to God, but they can't give us assurance of "perfection" in the idea of being perfectly forgiven of our sins. There, hope all of that helps.

8. Verse 12: For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law.
- a) For a Jewish person living at the time when this book was written, when the top priest (called the "High Priest") died in Israel, usually his oldest son took over that duty. The point being that the average Israelite of that day now looked to a new "High Priest" to perform the rituals for the forgiveness of sin as described in the Old Testament. In that sense, there was a change in the law in that a Jewish person looked to a new leader.
 - i) I read that between the time Aaron was first made the High Priest and the time the Romans destroyed the Jewish temple in 70AD, there were a total of 84 high priests. Am I positive that number is correct? No. For those Jewish believers, they had a "change in their law" of who was in charge when a new high priest took over.
 - b) OK John, so what? To explain how this verse affects us, understand that this verse has a "double meaning". Yes it does refer to a new "High Priest" for the Jews. It also refers to the fact that there are two High Priest "systems": One based on Melchizedek and one based on Aaron and all of his descendants.
 - i) OK John, again, so what? For Jesus to be our high priest, it must be based on some other Old Testament law and not based on this specific group of Jewish priests. The point is to realize that God the Father did ordain Jesus to be our High Priest before God the Father forever. The idea is for us Christians to realize that the concept of Jesus as our priest was ordained in the Old Testament, long before this other system of priests was ever put into place.
9. Verse 13: 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.
- a) In order to understand why this whole discussion about Jesus as our top priest is so important, one has to remember that Jewish people of Jesus day did realize that He came from the tribe of Judah and not the tribe of Levi. There is nothing ever said in the Old Testament about anyone from Judah ever being a priest.
 - i) To explain, let me return to my silly illustration about a man named United States who had 50 sons. Each son inherited a separate piece of land. The descendants of one of those sons were told you don't get your own land. You must be scattered amongst the descendants of the other sons. In Israel back then, that group were the Levites. The point being is that Jesus came from the line of one of the other sons, and nothing was ever said about people from Jesus' tribe ever being a priest.
 - a) The reason the Book of Hebrews is making such a big deal about this, is that it may have been difficult for Jewish people to understand how Jesus could be a priest since he was not from the tribe of Levi.
 - b) It might be important for the moment to discuss why God the Father always separated the concept of priests and rulers. Remember that the tribe Jesus was from was the same tribe that King David was from. From that tribe, the promised Messiah (eternal king) was to be a political ruler. Many Christians get the idea that Jesus was called to be a ruler over our lives. Why was Jesus called to be a priest as well, when he was not from the tribe of Levi?
 - i) To put that question in our vocabulary, I understand that Jesus rules over my life, but why should I turn to Him as my priest when I got my "buddy" over here?
 - ii) Before I answer that question, let me explain why God separated the offices of priests and rulers. In essence, it was too much power for one person to have. I heard second hand that Billy Graham made the comment that one big mistake he made in his life was trying to be a pastor and get involved in politics as well. That involvement in politics hindered his ability to be a pastor. Jerry Farwell made a similar comment before he died, as he was an ordained pastor and also was very involved in politics in the past few decades before he died. Neither "route" in itself is a bad thing. God does not call on people to do both.

- iii) The point here is that only God Himself can handle the power and responsibility of being a priest as well as a political leader. When other people have tried to do both in history they have failed. God the Father separated that power for a reason. By the way, when the "Antichrist" comes, he will also hold both offices for a while.
 - c) OK, what about that Melchizedek guy? Wasn't he both a priest and political ruler? Yes, he was. That is why many bible scholars believe Melchizedek was an appearance of Jesus in his "pre-incarnate" state. Remember that Jesus always existed, but He came into our world through Mary. So was Melchizedek actually Jesus or not? That has been debated for millenniums. We will find out one day in heaven whether or not Melchizedek and Jesus were actually the same person. Until then, it is just a debatable question.
 - i) This leads me back to the other question I raised here: What do I do with the other "priests" in my life if Jesus is my priest before God the Father? Yes, other people can still help us draw closer to God. There is a role for both in our lives. We can pray to Jesus directly to help us with our lives. We should also have other good Christians help us to guide our lives. God never calls on us to isolate ourselves for Him. To state it another way, the Christian life was never meant to be "Jesus and me, and I don't need anyone else". God desires that the Christian life be teamwork and we are to be involved with other believers. That is why we are to have other "priests" (other believers) in our lives and not just Jesus.
10. Verse 15: And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, ¹⁶one 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."
- a) I believe I have made the point in every lesson so far in Hebrews, that it is not possible to get through a chapter of this book without at least one Old Testament quote. Chapter 7 continues that trend. In Verse 17, we get a familiar quote (repeating the same quote as given in previous chapters) of Psalm 110, Verse 4. In fact, this verse is not only quoted here in Verse 17, but it is quoted again in Verse 21 coming up.
 - i) So why quote this verse twice in one chapter? Is the writer running out of things to say and repeating this quote twice? ☺ The answer is that separate points are being made with each quote. It is quoted in Verse 17 for one reason and this verse is quoted again in Verse 21 for another reason. Since I am discussing Verses 15-17 here, let me focus for the moment on why it is quoted here in these verses.
 - b) So what is the point about these quotes? The key word is the word "forever" in Verse 17. When the story of Melchizedek is told in Genesis, there is no reference to when or how he dies. Speaking symbolically, it is "as if" Melchizedek did live forever. The related idea is that Jesus is at God's right hand forever.
 - i) Let me explain this in a way we may not have thought about before. As Christians we believe that Jesus will always be fully human as well as always be fully God. That means when we are resurrected we will have some sort of a new body that will physically last forever and not wear out. I do believe in heaven we will each be able to recognize each other. That is good, as I struggle to remember names. ☺ When we get new bodies in heaven, they won't wear out. Do I understand how that works? No. I just accept the necessity of that to be true.
 - ii) OK John, so why is that important to think about here? It is for us to realize that Jesus will forever be our High Priest. It has now been about 2,000 years since Jesus was resurrected. Think about the idea that for 2,000 years, Jesus has been sitting next to God the Father being a priest on behalf of people. Wouldn't one get tired of sitting that long? Wouldn't a person get bored doing that same job for that long a period of time? That is why it is necessary to remind us that we don't wear out in heaven and our new heavenly bodies can handle that type of endurance.

- c) This set of verses is here to remind us that Jesus in effect never gets bored or never gets tired of being our priest before God the Father. That is why the writer of Hebrews compares Jesus to Melchizedek in that because the bible does not record the death of Melchizedek, neither does Jesus ever stop being our priest as well as our king.
 - i) I get the idea that Jesus is still doing this job for 2,000 years and counting. What does that mean practically for me? It means that He wants to hear from us. It means that He wants to guide our lives. Let me give an example prayer here:
 - a) Dear God, I can't seem to stop doing what I know is displeasing to You. I can't have victory over this issue based on my own efforts. I want Your help to give me victory over this issue. I'm going to stop trying on my own to get better on my own and trust in You to guide me through this issue. Therefore, when I do have victory in this area of my life, I can give You all the credit and not my ability to deal with this issue.
 - b) That is also when our "friends the priests" come into play. We should ask others to pray for us over this issue. We ask other believers to help us through whatever difficulties we face in our lives.
 - ii) That in effect is why we need both Jesus as our "High Priest" as well as other "priests" (including our Christian friends) in our lives as well.
 - d) That would make a wonderful ending to this lesson, but we still have 11 verses to go.
11. Verse 18: The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless¹⁹ (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.
- a) To explain these verses, one has to understand the purpose of the Old Testament laws. Can one be made sinless by understanding them? Of course not. What those laws do is point out how we are displeasing to Him. To put it another way, the purpose of those laws is to show us what God expects of our lives. The ability to obey those laws does not come from our own power, but from drawing upon His power in the first place.
 - i) Are you saying I have to live like a religious Jew through God's power? No. Some of those laws obviously apply today such as to not to steal or not murder. Other laws such as the "food laws" for example, (Leviticus 11) were designed to teach us lessons about worshipping God and those laws do not bind Christians. Many of the Old Testament laws are about making sacrifices for sins. Since Jesus is our complete sacrifice for sin, those specific laws are not binding upon Christians.
 - ii) If some of the laws still apply today and some do not, which ones do we obey? The answer is to read and study them and learn from them. Remember that we can't obey any of those laws by "trying harder", but only by the power that our High Priest provides for us can we ever live a life pleasing to God.
 - b) This leads me to Verse 19 where it says a "better hope is introduced". In other words, since we can't please God by trying really hard to obey the law, the "better hope" is about drawing upon His power in order to live the life God the Father wants us to live. That is why Jesus is still at God's right hand after 2,000 years and counting. So we can pray to Him to guide us to live the type of life He desires for us.
12. Verse 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 guarantee of a better covenant.
- a) Notice in these three verses, the word "oath" is stated four times. The idea is that if God states something in the bible, He is not capable of lying and we can trust that statement (think of it as a promise to us) to be true. The oath is again, this quote from Psalm 110, Verse 4 that says Jesus is to be a priest forever based on Melchizedek. It is not based on the Jewish system of priests that have existed for thousands of years. Jesus role as a priest is greater as than any other system of priests as it is based on God's unchangeable oath.

- b) With that stated, let me now return to Verse 20. That verse says that other people became priests without oaths. Think of it this way, when our pastors and priests were ordained in our local churches, does God make a statement to ordain them as a priest? We may agree as a church to accept them as "priests", but there is no recorded oath by God for them.
 - i) To state this historically, there is nothing written in the Old Testament that states the system of priests ordained as the descendants of Aaron (the Levi priests) will continue forever. They may continue as long as this world exists, but in heaven, there will not be any need for priests other than Jesus Himself.
 - ii) In other words, as long as there are problems in this world, having a system of local "priests" to help people is a good thing. However, the only oath (promise) made by God the Father of a priest lasting forever is that of Jesus role as priest.
 - c) Now let me focus on the word "covenant", which is the last word in Verse 22. The King James Bible translates that same word "covenant" as "testament". If you wonder why the Old Testament is called the "Old Testament" and if you wonder why the New Testament is called "the New Testament", that word is a big clue.
 - i) The idea here is not that there was a separate God for each testament. The word that is translated covenant (or testament) is the same concept used when one is making out a will. Human wills are traditionally called "Last will and testament".
 - ii) This leads me back to Verse 20. That verse is saying Jesus is the author of a better covenant (think "deal" in our vocabulary) than the Old Testament (covenant).
 - iii) Here is how I best summarize the difference between God's promise of the Old Testament versus the New Testament: The old covenant meant that one had to turn from one's sins in order to please God. The new covenant means one turns from sin out of gratitude for what God has already done for us on the cross.
 - iv) To put it another way, the biggest difference between the old covenant and the new covenant is "necessity versus gratitude". In the Old Testament, one had to turn from sin out of necessity for forgiveness. In the New Testament, to believe in Jesus, means one is already forgiven, but we confess and turn away from our sins out of gratitude for what God has already done for us.
 - v) All of this leads us back to Jesus as our high priest. He does not struggle with our sin issues. He wants to help us through them, but because He has already paid the price on our behalf, we don't have to worry about the eternal consequences of any and all sins we have or will ever commit in our lives as believers in Jesus.
 - a) This leads us back to the word "oath". Because God the Father made that oath, it is not changeable. We can trust in His oath that Jesus is our high priest as much as we can trust any other promise made in the bible.
13. Verse 23: Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office;²⁴ but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood.²⁵ Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.
- a) The Jewish system of priests as well as our own system of priests cannot continue forever simply because people die. As wonderful as any of our friends are as priests, let's face it, sooner or later, their life on earth is going to end. The point being is Jesus does continue His priesthood forever. This leads me back to my point that whatever our bodies are like in heaven, they don't wear out, nor do we get tired. That is how Jesus can continue to sit and be at God the Father's right hand for roughly 2,000 years and counting.
 - i) We know that Jesus' priesthood is permanent because of the oath made by God the Father, (again, the oath as stated in Psalm 110, Verse 4, which was stated twice in this chapter) and by the fact that we as Christians accept the idea that when we go to heaven, our new bodies like the new body that Jesus was given will last forever. In other words, neither Jesus nor ourselves will ever get physically tired in heaven.

- b) This leads me back to my lesson title about our "priestly friends". As good as those people may be in life, they can't save us from our sins because they don't live forever.
 - i) To say it another way, we may sin after they die. However, Jesus is always there for us even after our friends have past on into the next life.
 - c) Now notice the last part of Verse 25. It says, "He always lives to intercede for them".
 - i) Again, Jesus doesn't get tired of interceding for us nor does He ever get bored. Personally after 2,000 years of interceding for people, I would be extremely bored with it and very worn out. We have to accept the idea that if God is perfect, then it is not possible for Him to be bored or tired of interceding on our behalf.
 - ii) What that means for us is no matter how bad we have sinned, or how often we have repeated the same mistakes over and over again, Jesus is still willing to help us through our issues. We can trust in a God that never, ever gives up on us. That does not mean we have a free license to go sin all we want. Remember that the idea of the new covenant (again or "testament") means we want to please God out of gratitude for what He has done for our lives. We want to please God not because we have to, but because we want to.
14. Verse 26: Such a high priest meets our need--one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.
- a) In Verse 26, we get a description of who Jesus is, as our high priest.
 - i) First it says Jesus is "holy". That means He is set apart to do God the Father's will. As an example, it would be like having a specific plate (for eating) and saying this plate is only for the use of this one person. That is setting that plate apart. That in effect what "holy" means, when something is set apart just for God's use.
 - ii) Next we have "blameless" (also translated "harmless"). In other words, we can't find any faults in Jesus. In the Gospel accounts, He did violate some of the Jewish interpretations of the laws in that He did miracles on the Sabbath. Jesus pointed out how God the Father is guiding our lives every day of the week, and therefore, it was not a sin for Jesus to go a good deed on the day of the week set out for rest.
 - iii) Next we have "pure". The concept is similar to blameless. The idea is that Jesus never committed a sin. Think of "pure" as we can't find any faults in his life.
 - iv) Next we have "set apart from sinners". I believe that Jesus had the ability to sin the same way Adam and Eve had the ability to sin, but Jesus chose not to. The book of Hebrews itself tells us Jesus was "tempted", but chose not sin. (Hebrews 2:18).
 - a) Let me also comment on the issue of "babies and sinners". A lot of people struggle with the idea of a newborn baby being guilty of sin. The answer is that because Adam and Eve sinned, we are all born with this incurable disease called sin that is passed on from one generation to the other.
 - b) That is why God the Father was the one who impregnated Mary. Jesus did not have the sin disease past on to Him like the rest of us. However, He still had the temptation to sin the same way Adam and Eve were tempted.
 - c) The point being is that Jesus "was set apart from sinners" because unlike Adam, he never chose to sin in His time on earth.
 - v) Finally, the verse says Jesus was "exalted above the heavens". To explain this I have to go back to something I said in my first lesson on Hebrews: The bible teaches that there are three "heavens". The first heaven refers to our atmosphere. The second heaven refers to outer space. The third heaven refers to wherever God's throne is. As an example of this, see 2nd Corinthians 12:2. But isn't Jesus in heaven right now? The point is He is exalted above all the other creatures that exist in heaven at this moment.
 - vi) OK why give this whole lecture on titles for Jesus? It is to understand that because He is sinless and He is in heaven, then He deserves to be our top priest.

15. Verse 27: 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.
- a) When the Jewish priests offered up sacrifices for sins, first they were required to offer sacrifices for their own sins, before they could offer up sacrifices for other people's sins. Innocent (non-meat eating) animals were killed for the sake of people's sins. It shows the sinner that "sin hurts the innocent" by killing these animals for people's sins.
 - i) When the animal was killed, both the priest and the person who committed the sin were to identify themselves with the animal in order to comprehend the act of God forgiving the sin by accepting the sacrifice on behalf of the sinner.
 - ii) So you know religious Jewish people today no longer offer animals for their sins. When the Romans destroyed their main temple in 70AD, a new system was set up where they would just confess their sins. It is a little like when a Roman Catholic believer goes to "confession" to confess their sins before a priest and before God.
 - b) One of the issues that is struggling for a person of a religious Jewish background is the idea of a person offering up themselves for the sins of others. Pagan religions would offer up people for the sins of their people and Jewish people hated that practice.
 - i) So here was Jesus offering up Himself for the sins of others. One has to grasp how difficult that concept would seem to a religious Jew of one person offering up himself for the sake of other people. Yes of course, that is exactly what Jesus did, and for the sake of us believing Christians, I don't have to elaborate that point.
 - ii) So how does one explain to a Jewish person how one man can die for the sake of other people and God the Father accept that sacrifice? The answer is to grasp the concept that this only works if that man is in fact God Himself. Let me explain:
 - a) How can God the Father show the world that He loves the world and at the same time show that all sin is to be punished? It is for God Himself to put Himself in what He created (our world) and take the punishment for all sin on Himself. That is why Jesus had to be fully human and fully God.
 - iii) Yes, we Christians accept this as fact. Because many people refuse to accept it, we need to pray for God to open up people's hearts to the truth of this message.
16. Verse 28: 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.
- a) The writer of Hebrews sums up the whole argument about "Jesus and priests" by stating the obvious fact that "top priests" are still people and because they and us are people, we all live in the danger of sinning at any time. Why is that? Because that sin nature is what each of us are born with. As I once heard, "We don't steal horses because we are a horse thief, we are horse thieves by nature, and therefore we just steal horses". (Chuck Smith).
 - b) The point being is that we are all born with "sin disease" and that includes the people we know that are ordained as "priests" as well as all Christian believers. As wonderful a person our "priestly friends" may be to us, they are still not as good a source to help us with our lives as "The Son", because He is a priest as ordained by an oath. That oath is in effect, Psalm 110, Verse 4, which has been quoted a lot in the book of Hebrews.
17. With that said, let me close in prayer. Heavenly Father, thank You that we also have a top priest in heaven that we can turn to, to help us with whatever issues we face in life. Thank you also for our Christian friends who help us in our own lives. Help us to be helpers to others just as You call on them to help us and other people. Help us to understand the roles and functions of Jesus as our High Priest as well as our "priestly friends" in our own lives. We thank You for paying the price for our sins. Help us to turn from sin out of gratitude for what You have done, will do, and are continuously doing in our lives. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.