

**SERMON NOTES**  
**Hebrews 7:1-28**  
***“The Only Access to God’s Presence”***

**Intro:**

- What is the purpose of religion?
- **According to bloggers & Google websites:**
- *To explain the mysteries of nature*
- To provide moral & ethical instruction
- *To provide peace of mind in the face of death*
- To show the path to eternal life
- *To provide a guide for people to be good*
- To answer the fundamental questions of the meaning of life
- *To re-unite with God by means of meditation*
- To live by the Golden Rule
- *To help us cope with death*
- To worship God our Creator
- *To gain power and control over others*
- To scare people into submission and oppression
- *To help us deal with pain, suffering and grief*
- To explain where we all came from
- *To provide a moral guiding light for right social behavior*
  
- **A biblical definition for the purpose of religion: *To provide a right relationship with God and access to His Presence***
  
- *In a very real sense, religion is necessary because of the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden*
- **God created humans – male and female – in His image in order to have a love relationship with Him**
- *But Adam and Eve sinned – and all human beings since – resulting in estrangement from God*
- **God has given us His Law – His commandments – to show us how to live in order to enjoy fellowship with God**
- *But human beings are not able to keep God’s laws – we are by nature rebels and law-breakers– and therefore this fellowship with God was broken and access to God’s holy presence was barred*

- **Sin can no more exist in the presence of God's holiness than kindling wood can exist in the presence of a forest fire**
- *Therefore all of us sinners are disqualified from entering His holy presence*
  
- Religions that do not recognize or acknowledge this reality have a defective view of the nature of God – **underestimating His holiness** – or a defective view of the nature of man – **overestimating his goodness** – or both
- **The primary purpose of religion is to answer this need: how can sinful man gain access to a holy God?**
- *And most religions do so by means of a priesthood and a sacrificial system*
  
- The Latin word for priest means a *bridge-builder*
- *The priest was a man whose function was to build a bridge between men and God by means of the sacrificial system*
- Since the wages of sin is death, therefore access to God required the shedding of blood of an animal sacrificed by a qualified priest
  
- **These were the key elements of the religion of the Old Testament: The Law, the Priesthood, and the Sacrificial System**
- *The Law to show how to maintain a covenant relationship with a holy God // and sacrifices offered by priests to atone for the inevitable breaking of God's laws by sinful men and women*
  
- **How can human beings obtain access to the Creator God?**
- *This is the central question of religion*
  
- And there are two basic categories of answers provided by various religions:
- *Either we obtain access by means of personal merit and righteousness or we obtain access by means of the sacrifice of a substitute*
- **What does the Bible say?**

**Romans 3:10 (NIV)** <sup>10</sup>As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one;

**Romans 3:20** <sup>20</sup>For no one can ever be made right in God's sight by doing what his law commands. For the more we know God's law, the clearer it becomes that we aren't obeying it.

**Romans 3:23 (NIV)** <sup>23</sup>For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

- *Those who think they can obtain a right relationship with God by means of personal merit or living a moral life or being a good person are living in a fantasy world that is divorced from reality*
- *God is the Sovereign Ruler and Supreme Judge of His universe – and He has judged us all guilty of breaking His laws and has decreed that law-breakers may obtain access to Him only by means of the shedding of blood, because the wages of sin is death – and therefore the death of a sacrifice is required to pay the penalty*
- *It is not a matter of good people going to heaven and bad people going to hell*
- *God will judge everyone according to their deeds – but that is NOT how access to God’s Presence is determined*
- ***Rather the Bible teaches that those who accept the Sacrifice of Christ for the forgiveness of sins are granted access to God and those who reject Christ remain separated from God by their sins – it has nothing to do with the superiority of Christians and everything to do with the superiority of Christ***
- ***Why is Jesus the Only Access to God’s Presence?***
- *That very question sticks in the craw of many people today who accept the dogma of Tolerance so prevalent in our age*
- *It’s OK to have winners and losers in sports and in politics and to argue for the superiority of one’s team or candidate or party or scientific theory or ideology in every other arena – but when it comes to religion – all belief systems are regarded as equally valid, and truth is in the eye of the beholder*
- *The book of Hebrews makes the case for the superiority of Jesus Christ and his priesthood and his self-sacrifice over the old covenant priesthood and sacrificial system – and by extension – over every other religious system for obtaining access to God’s Presence*
- *To counter the argument of Hebrews that Jesus is the Only Way to God, one must either argue for access to God by personal merit apart from a substitutionary sacrifice – in effect arguing that Jesus Christ died on the Cross for nothing – or else one must argue that there is another priest and sacrifice who is the equal of Jesus Christ*

## I. A HIGH PRIEST FOREVER, IN THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK

- Hebrews 6 ends with a statement that our assurance of salvation – the anchor for our soul – *is linked to Jesus' saving work as High Priest in the order of Melchizedek*
- So who is Melchizedek and what does it mean that Jesus is a high priest forever in the order of Melchizedek – and what does that have to do with the security of our hope of salvation?
- **Melchizedek is mentioned in two OT Scriptures:**

**Genesis 14:17 - 20 (NIV)** <sup>17</sup>After Abram returned from defeating Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). <sup>18</sup>Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, <sup>19</sup>and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. <sup>20</sup> And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

**Psalms 110:4 (NIV)** <sup>4</sup> The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

- *Genesis relates the story of Abraham's return from a military victory over some Canaanite kings to rescue his nephew Lot*
- Abraham is met by a king named Melchizedek who offers him bread and wine, and then blesses Abraham and then praises the Most High God, the Creator of heaven and earth, giving God the glory for Abraham's victory
- *Melchizedek was a priest of the one true God in addition to being the King of Jerusalem – and so Abraham gave him a tithe of the spoils of his victory*
- Melchizedek was the King of Jerusalem and a priest of the Most High God, but he was not a priest in the order of Aaron of the tribe of Levi – indeed, he was not Jewish at all – indeed, we know nothing at all of his genealogy

**Hebrews 7:1 - 3 (NIV)** <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.

**(1) A priesthood of righteousness and peace**

- *“Melchizedek” means “King of Righteousness” in Hebrew*
- *Salem is short for Jerusalem and is closely related to Shalom, meaning “peace”*
- **So Melchizedek is King of Righteousness and King of Peace**
- *Jesus is a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek*

**Romans 5:1** Therefore, since we have been made right in God’s sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.

**Romans 3:21-22** <sup>21</sup>But now God has shown us a different way of being right in his sight—not by obeying the law but by the way promised in the Scriptures long ago.

<sup>22</sup>We are made right in God’s sight when we trust in Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in this same way, no matter who we are or what we have done.

- *Peace with God is based upon the righteousness of God which is imparted to all who trust in Jesus Christ to take away their sins*
- **This righteousness and this peace are available to anyone – whatever their religious background // whatever their nationality or race or culture // whether rich or poor // educated or uneducated // moral or immoral // religious or irreligious // model citizen or criminal**
- *Salvation through Jesus Christ is available to anyone – no matter who they are or what they have done*
- *The reality is – there is no one righteous and qualified to obtain access to God by his own merits – but there is One Righteous One – Jesus Christ – who cleanses us of all our unrighteousness by his shed blood and imparts to us His own righteousness when we put our faith in Him – and that gives us peace with God and access into His holy Presence*

## **(2) A royal priesthood**

- **Melchizedek was both a Priest and a King**
- *Within the old covenant, priests were all descended from Aaron of the tribe of Levi, but all the kings of Judah were descendants of David of the tribe of Judah – and the promised Messiah was also to be a son of David*
- **By God’s own Law, only priests of the tribe of Levi were permitted to offer sacrifices in the Temple – not even Kings could do that**
- *So how then would the Messiah – a son of David and descendant of Judah – be able to be the High Priest – the bridge-builder – who would be able to usher us sinners into the holy Presence of God in heaven?*

- **Jesus the Messiah – God’s anointed King of Kings – is a High Priest forever in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron**
- *And the priesthood of Melchizedek is a royal priesthood not dependent on genealogy or ancestral bloodline*

### **(3) An eternal priesthood**

**Psalm 110:4 (NIV)** <sup>4</sup> The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”

- *Who is the “you” who is a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek?*

**Psalm 110:1 (NIV)** <sup>1</sup> The LORD (Yahweh) says to my (King David’s) Lord (Adonai): “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”

- *Who is David’s Lord? The Messiah – Jesus – who is son of David as to his human lineage and Lord of David as to his Deity*

**Matthew 22:41 - 45 (NIV)** <sup>41</sup>While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, <sup>42</sup>**“What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?”** “The son of David,” they replied. <sup>43</sup>He said to them, **“How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him ‘Lord’? For he says,** <sup>44</sup>**“‘The Lord said to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.’”** <sup>45</sup>**If then David calls him ‘Lord,’ how can he be his son?”**

- *Where did the apostles and writers of the NT get the idea that Jesus was both human and divine, that he was both Sovereign King and High Priest forever in the order of Melchizedek, that he was the fulfillment of Psalm 110 and other OT Scriptures?*
- **From Jesus Himself**

**Luke 24:44 (NIV)** <sup>44</sup>He said to them, **“This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”**

- *Psalm 110 was written about Jesus and fulfilled by Jesus*
- *And so was the Genesis 14 account of Melchizedek*
- *There is no reference to Melchizedek’s ancestry or birth or death in Gen. 14*
- **This does not mean that Melchizedek was a supernatural being**

- *But based on Psalm 100:4, the writer to Hebrews, inspired by the Holy Spirit – interprets the priesthood of Melchizedek to be a type or foreshadowing of the priesthood of the eternal Son of God*

**Hebrews 7:3 (NIV)** <sup>3</sup>Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he (Melchizedek) remains a priest forever.

- *Jesus is a High Priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek*

#### **(4) A superior priesthood**

- *Melchizedek was greater than Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation – including the Levites and priestly descendants of Aaron*
- *How so?*
- *The one who collects a tithe is greater than the one who pays it*
- *And the lesser person is blessed by the greater*
- *Abraham gave a tithe to Melchizedek and Melchizedek gave a blessing to Abraham – thus in both ways Melchizedek was greater than Abraham and the Levitical priesthood descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*
- *If the old priesthood of Aaron had been able to fulfill the function of bringing sinners into the presence of God, there would have been no need for a new priesthood*
- *But the blood of bulls and goats offered by sinful, mortal priests cannot take away the sins of humanity*
- *That was only a temporary provision until the Messiah – who is both High Priest and Lamb of God – came to take away the sins of the world*

**Hebrews 7:18-19** Yes, the old system of priesthood based on family lines was canceled because it didn't work. It was weak and useless for saving people. <sup>19</sup>It never made anyone really right with God. But now we have a far better hope, for Christ makes us acceptable to God, and now we may draw near to him.

## **II. THE BASIS FOR THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD**

- *What is the basis for the NT claim that Jesus is the only Mediator – the only Bridge – the only Way to God – that the Priesthood and Sacrifice of Jesus Christ is the Only effective Access to God's Presence – that Jesus Christ has no equals in his ability to save us from our sins and makes us right with God?*

- This is an offensive claim to many people in our pluralistic society, so we need to be prepared to defend the claim of Christ's Superiority

**(1) Determined by an oath of God**

**Hebrews 7:20-22** <sup>20</sup>God took an oath that Christ would always be a priest, but he never did this for any other priest. <sup>21</sup>Only to Jesus did he say, "The Lord has taken an oath and will not break his vow: 'You are a priest forever.'"

<sup>22</sup>Because of God's oath, it is Jesus who guarantees the effectiveness of this better covenant.

- ***"Jesus is the only Access to God's Presence"***
- **Who says?**
- **God says – with an oath – and He does not lie and will not change His mind**
- **Of course, you are free to disagree with God**
- ***Maybe you think there should be many ways to God and to heaven***
- **Maybe you can think of logical arguments why that should be the case**
- ***Maybe you can try out those arguments on God on the Day of Judgment***
- **But consider this: From eternity past God decreed that His Son would be a priest forever – that access to God's holy presence would be through the priesthood and sacrifice of Jesus Christ – and God has sworn in His Word and will not change His mind**
- **The old covenant priesthood of Aaron has been replaced by the permanent and eternal priesthood of Jesus**
- ***The Death of Jesus Christ on the Cross is God's only provision for the forgiveness of sins and the only means of access into His holy presence***
- **The Way of the Cross surpasses every other religious system that existed before or during the time of Christ – including all Eastern religions**
- ***But how do we know that some religion after Christ might not surpass the Way of the Cross – perhaps Islam or Bahai or Mormonism?***
- ***The Lord has sworn – and will not change his mind – the uniqueness and superiority of Christ's priesthood as the Only Way to God will last forever***
- **Therefore, religions such as Islam and Mormonism are not new revelations of God – rather they are contradictions of this permanent truth:**

**1 Timothy 2:5 (NIV)** <sup>5</sup>For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

- *That will never change – God said so – with an oath*

**(2) The power of an indestructible life**

\* *It was the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter – and the undefeated Hawkeyes were cruising with a 10-0 lead --And then it happened: Ricky Stanzi fumbled in the end zone and went down with a severe ankle injury*

- *Giving up the 7 points was no big deal – with Stanzi at the helm, the Hawks would have surely won the game*
- **But with their fearless leader and proven winner on crutches on the sidelines – and an untested freshman in his place – Iowa did not score again and are no longer undefeated – with the rest of the season in jeopardy as well**
- *Such is life in a fallen world*
- **When leaders go down – and are sidelined – and no longer in the game– everything can change**
- *Now it's one thing to lose a quarterback – but what if the man you're counting on to lead you into God's presence goes down and is sidelined and is no longer in the game*

**Hebrews 7:23 - 25 (NIV)** <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.

- *Aaron is dead*
- **So are Eleazar and Phinehas and Abiathar and Zadok and Azariah and Hilkiah and Jehozadak and Jeshua and all the other priests in the order of Aaron**
- *Their priestly ministry ended with their deaths*
- **Dead men cannot provide salvation and access to a living God**
- *The same can be said for Buddha and Confucius and Mohammed – and the same fate awaits the Dalai Lama*
- **Same for JFK and Ronald Reagan and one day, Barack Obama**
- *Leaders come and go – all leaders one day die*

- Their teachings can be studied and followed // and their deeds can be remembered // *but they are no longer in the game // all they can do is cheer from the sidelines*
- **With one exception**
- *Jesus of Nazareth was knocked out of the game when he was nailed to a Roman Cross 2000 years ago*
- **But 3 days later – he was back in the game – more powerful than ever – indestructible, in fact**
  
- ***Only Jesus of Nazareth conquered the grave and lives forever – and therefore he has a permanent priesthood – and therefore he is able to save completely and for all time those who come to God through his perfect sacrifice on the Cross***
  
- Why does the NT claim that Jesus – and only Jesus – is Savior and Lord of all mankind?
- *It has nothing to do with Christians claiming superiority for themselves or their good works or their beliefs or morality*
- It has nothing to do with Christians being narrow-minded and judgmental – though perhaps some are guilty on other counts
  
- **It is as simple as this: Jesus Christ is the Only Man ever to get back in the game after being knocked out**
- *Buddha is on the sidelines // Mohammed is on the sidelines // Charles Darwin is on the sidelines – But Jesus of Nazareth is back in the game – calling the plays – leading his team to victory*
  
- ***His resurrection proves that the death of Jesus Christ is God's only provision for the forgiveness of sins, and the risen Lord Jesus Christ is the only proven hope of eternal life***
- **No one else died for your sins except Jesus – and no one else rose from the dead except Jesus**
- *Therefore no one else can provide access into God's Presence, and no one else can give you eternal life*
- **His sacrificial death and bodily resurrection are what make Jesus unique and superior to every other priest and prophet and religious founder**

### **(3) *The Priest's sinless character***

**Hebrews 7:26-27** He is, therefore, exactly the kind of High Priest we need; for he is holy and blameless, unstained by sin, undefiled by sinners, and to him has been given

the place of honor in heaven. <sup>27</sup>He never needs the daily blood of animal sacrifices, as other priests did, to cover over first their own sins and then the sins of the people; for he finished all sacrifices, once and for all, when he sacrificed himself on the cross.

- *How can one sinner lead other sinners into the Presence of a holy God?*
- They cannot
- *But Jesus is not like other priests and prophets and religious leaders who need forgiveness for their own sins*
- **Jesus never sinned – Jesus is holy**
  
- *There are two Greek words for holy – the more common one has the meaning of being cleansed from sin and evil and being set apart for God's use*
- The word used here means being so pure as to need no cleansing
- *That is the kind of holy that Jesus – and only Jesus – is*
- **Unlike other priests – Jesus does not need to offer sacrifices for his own cleansing first before offering sacrifices for the people**
- *He is absolutely holy and sinless and needs no cleansing from personal sin*
- **Jesus is fit to enter God's holy presence without any need for a sacrificial offering for his own sins**

#### **(4) *The Priest's perfect offering***

- *Not only is Jesus the perfect High Priest – he is also the perfect offering*

**Hebrews 7:27 (NIV)** <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.

**Hebrews 9:12-15** <sup>12</sup>Once for all time he took blood into that Most Holy Place, but not the blood of goats and calves. He took his own blood, and with it he secured our salvation forever. <sup>13</sup>Under the old system, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a young cow could cleanse people's bodies from ritual defilement. <sup>14</sup>Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our hearts from deeds that lead to death so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. <sup>15</sup>That is why he is the one who mediates the new covenant between God and people, so that all who are invited can receive the eternal inheritance God has promised them. For Christ died to set them free from the penalty of the sins they had committed under that first covenant.

- ***Sinful priests approaching God with the blood of animal sacrifices could never take away all our sins once and for all***

- **But Jesus – the sinless, eternal, perfect High Priest – offered the one perfect sacrifice that could take away all our sins once and for all and restore access to a holy God**
- *Jesus offered up himself – not the blood of animals – and he did it for others – not for himself – and he did it once and for all time – not daily*
- **The sacrificial death of Jesus is unique in its permanence, its purity, its efficacy, and its cost**
- ***The Christian Gospel proclaims the sacrificial death of Jesus as the Only Access to the Presence of a Holy God – the only way of setting sinners free from the penalty of sin and making them right with God***

**Galatians 2:21** <sup>21</sup>I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness *comes* through the law, then Christ died in vain.”

- **Listen carefully: *the idea that all people of all religious faiths can come to God by any means they choose or think is right // the idea that most people are good enough to come to God apart from faith in Jesus Christ and what he did for us on the Cross – that may sound tolerant and open-minded and magnanimous – but here’s what it really means: **Jesus Christ died in vain – God sent Jesus to the Cross to die an unnecessary death*****
- **If a right relationship with God can be gained by any other means – then Jesus Christ died for nothing**
- **It is not arrogance or narrow-mindedness or self-righteousness that causes Christians to proclaim Jesus Christ as the only Way to God and heaven: *rather, it is a profound respect and gratitude for Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross and a passionate desire to give Jesus the honor he deserves for his sacrificial death and victorious resurrection***

**Conclusion:**

- ***Some people – even some believing Christians – relate to Jesus as if he is still on the sidelines***
- **He did a lot of great stuff 2000 years ago – walked on water / healed the sick / died for our sins / even arose from the grave**
- ***But now he is in heaven enjoying retirement – on the sidelines – no longer in the game***

**Hebrews 7:25 (Amplified):** Therefore He (Jesus) is able to save to the uttermost – completely, perfectly, finally and for all time and eternity – those who come to God

through Him, since He is always living to make petition to God and intercedes with Him and intervenes for them (us).

- ***Jesus is not a retired High Priest – He is a High Priest forever – He is in the game – and He is in charge – and the outcome is guaranteed***
- ***Jesus didn't just do something great for us 2000 years ago to save us from our sins – He continues to save us and intercede for us today***
- ***The word “to save” in verse 25 is in the present tense in Greek – indicating continuous action***
- ***Jesus continues to save us and intercede for us as our living Savior and eternal High Priest***
- ***Yes – this salvation is based on His finished work on the Cross 2000 years ago – but our continuing experience of being saved from the power of sin requires us to appropriate daily his ongoing saving work***
- ***Jesus is alive – and He is our active High Priest forever – and He is constantly working to save us – by the power of His Spirit within us***
  
- ***Daily we need to trust our risen Savior and great High Priest to save us from fear and disobedience and apathy and mistrust and anxiety and lust and anger and ungodly speech and selfishness and envy***
- ***We can be sure today that we have eternal life and are heading for heaven***
- ***But we are not yet saved to the uttermost, are we?***
- ***We still have areas of our life that are under the control of indwelling sin***
  
- ***So there are two ways in which we need to appropriate the saving work of Jesus Christ:***
  - (1) By trusting in his finished work on the Cross to cleanse us from all our sins and to make us right with God***  
 –this involves believing and trusting that Jesus Christ is the Perfect Priest offering the Perfect Sacrifice – namely His own sinless life– for the forgiveness of our sins
  
  - (2) By relying on the continuing ministry of Jesus our High Priest who continues His saving work in our lives by making intercession for us at the right hand of God***  
 –Don't be satisfied with your current level of salvation  
 –Rather, pursue holiness by appropriating the ongoing saving work of Jesus Christ to set you free from sin and transform you into His likeness  
 –Daily pray – in faith: ***Lord Jesus Christ, save me // set me free // make me whole // make me holy // make me more like you***

**Salvation Prayer**  
***“In Christ Alone”***