We Have a Superior Priest

**Hebrews 7:1-10**

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**Introduction:** What if I told you that, I know something better than Church. That there is something better than your Bible. I even know something better than the forgiveness of your sins. This is how religious people of the first century would have heard the words of the passage we are studying this morning.

Let me ask you then….If somebody were to say something like that to you, what would be your response? Would you come up swinging? Would you say defiantly, “Then Show Me?” Sadly there are only a few who would ask to be shown and even in our day few that want their comfort zone invaded by the Word of God… But Christ exalting gospel preachers persist because there is always (throughout the ages) a group of people present who the Holy Spirit had prepared to hear the gospel good news about Christ Himself. In our day, it might sound something like this, “Well, church hasn’t done me much good so far. I am still struggling with my sin and weaknesses in many areas. I try to understand the Bible, but it all seems so cryptic to me and although I have prayed a prayer of repentance I still feel like a guilty failure before God.”

Have you ever wondered why the trappings of “Churchianity” leave us so dissatisfied? Now I have you here this morning but there are thousands of people in our community this morning who say they are Christians but are not at church. They have spoken with their absence and not their mouths. Most people are unwilling to admit to these thoughts. When was the last time you heard a Christian or yourself say out loud something like; “I really don’t like church!” “When I read the Bible I don’t get much out of it!” Or “even though I have prayed to receive Christ and tried to live the Christian life I still feel guilty and depressed over the state of my soul!” You may say it to your family or co-workers but probably don’t say it to God or your pastor. But that is because it makes us look bad and not because it’s not true. What if it is true? What if you believe in Christ and want to follow Him but the Bible and church do nothing to fulfill your inner man? It is not just you! IT IS NOT JUST YOU!

According the Pew research 56% of church GOERS almost never read their Bible.

Gallup says that 40% of Americans surveyed say they regularly go to church but actual head counts reveal only 17% of Americans go to church regularly.

Pew research reports a recent survey of online sermons reveals that a person attending every single service in an evangelical church for two straight months would have only a 10% chance of hearing something about redemption or hell. In other words “The Gospel”

Have you ever been on a long trip and are returning home. You finally see a road sign that says, “Placerville.” This always gives brief flutter of excitement in our family, but would you consider pulling over next to the sign saying, “ah Placerville?” Of course not! How could we possible be satisfied with the sign itself when what we really want is just up the road. God gave men road signs (The Bible) pointing to what we really need. But sadly, in our day a majority of churches and believers have just pulled off the road and are trying to enjoy the sign. God calls us to press on toward home. Toward the person to whom the sign points, Jesus Christ, God the Son. May God grant us grace and understanding to do so.

**Hebrews chapter seven is in the Bible** to reveal the true purpose of worship, Bible study and fellowship. Here God declares the superiority of His Son Jesus to all other things. Religions encourage men to strive for acceptance with God. But The Gospel (good news about Jesus) is a one of a kind “island” in the “sea of religion.” It tells men to trust in Christ and not in religion, ritual, morality or sincerity. It teaches us that we are flawed, broken sinners and that Jesus is our flawless, unbroken and sinless Savior.

**Titus 3:3-7**  3 For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. 4 But when the kindness of God our Savior and *His* love for mankind appeared, 5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life.

Both religious and secular men today still react when confronted with the clear gospel message of Jesus Christ. Church is important because it is God’s safe haven in a world gone mad with sin and godlessness. The Bible is vital because it is the “road sign” pointing the way to Jesus and Home. Jesus is not only superior to all these but is the reason they all exist. Jesus is Supreme. Hebrews Seven teaches us that:

* We have a Better Priest
* We have a Better Covenant
* We have a Better Salvation

We will take these in bite size pieces for the next three weeks.

God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit conceived the plan of redemption in eternity past.

**Ephesians 1:4-5**  4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

**2 Thessalonians 2:13**  13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

God chose to progressively reveal His Son Christ over the centuries. He did this in many ways starting with His guarantee to Satan….overheard by Eve;

**Genesis 3:15**  15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."

In due time God called a single pagan man named Abraham and revealed Himself to him and caused Abraham to trust God in an extraordinary way. From Abraham and his wife Sarah, God singled out a blood line for His own Son…God the Son….Christ Jesus….to come into the world. The Prophets predicted the time and place of His human birth with such accuracy that it could only be of God. This is why Hebrews starts out this way…

**Hebrews 1:1-2**  God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

Along the line God raised up Moses and when He brought Israel into the land…(This is the land they are in now) … when He brought them into the land He gave them the law. The Law specified a series of sacrifices that would be performed by priests with a precise genealogy. They had to be descendants of Levi whose name means “joined in harmony.” Only Levites could be priests and only priest could “join in harmony” or reconcile rebellious men to a law giving God.

Man needed someone to help him with this long before the Law of Moses. Joseph’s wife was the daughter of a priest. Moses’ father-in-law was “The Priest of Midian.” And before God gave the Law to Moses there were already some priest in Israel.

**Exodus 19:24**  24 Then the LORD said to him, "Go down and come up *again*, you and Aaron with you; but do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the LORD, or He will break forth upon them."

All these priests however had feet of clay. Consider Israel’s first High Priest, Aaron. He led the people to worship the golden calf and yet God showed grace toward him. Aaron’s sons were rejected for their rebellion and God chose the whole tribe of Levi as priest after that. A sinless holy God and sinful ruined men need someone to stand between them. Through the Law, God chose the Levites to do that. Not because they were perfect, but because God picked them to do that.

Jesus was not a Levite. He was from the tribe of Judah. The tribe of David and Israel’s kings. Both Joseph and Mary were descendants of David. Kings were never to do the work of priests in the Old Testament. Israel’s first king lost the throne when he presumed to do the priest’s work. You and I need a priest. We need someone to speak to us about God and to plead with God about us. Someone who can go freely into the presence of God on our behalf. You can’t do that….can you? Of course you can’t! The priest of The Law offered sacrifices to God for the sins of the people. The High Priest went once a year:

**Leviticus 9:7** Moses then said to Aaron, "Come near to the altar and offer your sin offering and your burnt offering, that you may make atonement for yourself and for the people; then make the offering for the people, that you may make atonement for them, just as the LORD has commanded."

Jesus is superior to all priests even the High Priest of Israel that God Himself had established. He was a sinner as we can see above. Jesus was without sin. He has not just symbolically gone behind the veil or curtain of the temple to atone for your sin. He has gone into the throne room of God and anchored your eternal soul to the throne of God.

**Hebrews 6:19-20**  19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a *hope* both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, 20 where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

All other priesthoods were cancelled the day Jesus died on the cross. At that moment God reached down from heaven and tore this dividing veil in half from top to bottom. When Israel refused to accept that Jesus had fulfilled the priesthood, God sent the Romans to destroy the temple entirely. When they would not accept that He sent them again to scatter them to the four corners of the Earth. The end result? Today… **We Have A Better Priest**

**For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him [1]:** God speaks of an extraordinary Old Testament man who pointed all men toward the God-man Christ Jesus. He is only described once in the Old Testament.

**Genesis 14:18-20**  18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High. 19 He blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; 20 And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." He gave him a tenth of all.

David, 1000 years later in Psalm 110, reveals that the Messiah will be a Priest like Melchizedek and then nothing more is said about Him for another 1000 years. Four verses spread over 2 millennium, but God had planted the seed that was about to grow into the most spectacular revelation of Himself in History. Jesus was the Priest to whom Melchizedek pointed. Let’s see how.

**To whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all *the spoils*, was first of all, by the translation *of his name*, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace [2]:** There was no law telling Abraham to give a tithe to Melchizedek. He did it because he recognized and responded to Melchizedek’s standing with God. God had appointed Melchizedek and the giving of tithes was actually a gift to God. When you give you should give this way. Give to God and then your gift will be an act of worship and not some money to meet a need somewhere.

Melchizedek is a King! He rules righteously in a wicked, godless world of rulers. He is the chief example of righteousness! Melchizedek was an example of what God wants from Kings.

He is King of Salem. The ancient name of Jerusalem. Salem comes from the word Shalom or Peace. So the Bible just defines it for us. Melchizedek is “King of Peace.” Peace is a common word, but seldom defined. It means freedom from troubling or oppressive thoughts or emotions and not just physical hostility. This is an extremely rare quality anywhere at any time.

Like a “Cattle King” or the “King of a home,” Melchizedek is King of Righteousness!

**Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually [3]:** Is this Melchizedek an Old Testament appearance of Christ? I do not think this is the case. The text says he is “like the Son of God” not “the Son of God.” This verse also appears in the middle of a teaching on the earthly, legal requirement for a priest.

The priests under the Law of Moses must be able to prove their father’s, their mother’s and their own genealogy. Melchizedek was a priest with no recorded information of this type. He was nevertheless, “A Priest of God” because he was chosen by God and not by a genealogy. The same is true of Jesus. NOT a Levite, but made a priest by God the Father.

Melchizedek was a priest of God for all men, not just for Jews because God chose Him before there were even Jews. He is the example and type of the ultimate and universal Priest that all men need. Jesus, like Melchizedek was chosen directly by God with no regard to his human genealogy.

**Now observe how great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the choicest spoils [4]:** Abraham is the greatest example of faith in the Bible. Perhaps this Tithe was a religious tax like the one God commanded of the Jews in order to care for a full time priesthood, but it is more than that.

**And those indeed of the sons of Levi who receive the priest's office have commandment in the Law to collect a tenth from the people, that is, from their brethren, although these are descended from Abraham [5]:** The Priesthood in Israel collected the tithe by God’s command. It was not a money grab. God wanted full time ministers in His Temple and decided to take one tribe and make them full time. The rest of Israel would pay 10% to support the full time worship of God so that they would not have to send their own sons to Jerusalem to do it.

**But the one whose genealogy is not traced from them collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises [6]:** But Melchizedek was not a Levite. Just like Jesus. Just like Jesus Melchizedek was made worthy to receive this honor by God Himself and not on the basis of his parentage. In return, Melchizedek blessed the man who was promised that His heir would be the Messiah.

**But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater [7]:** This proves that Melchizedek is the greater of the two. As great as Abraham was Melchizedek was greater.

**In this case mortal men receive tithes, but in that case one *receives them*, of whom it is witnessed that he lives on [8]:** Levites come and go. They are born, they live for a while and then die. During their lives they receive tithes for their physical support. In the Scripture God deliberately does not tell us when Melchizedek was born, how long he lived or when he died. In Scripture he is said to live on as a type of Jesus Christ.

**And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes 10 for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him [9-10]:** To the Jews, their entire religious life revolved around the priesthood and the sacrifices they offered. The priests had been appointed by the Law originally from the tribe of Levi and every true priest came from Levi. The priests receive tithes! They did not pay them! They are the priests after all. But they are descendants of Abraham and Abraham paid tithes to another priest…a non-Jewish, non-Levitical, non-Mosaic Law priest. A priest vastly superior the one established by the law.

Now, was the priesthood and the temple bad? Absolutely not! They were insufficient. The Priests of the Law could never take away sins, but in Christ we have a Better Priest who actually can. In our day many look to the church for their spiritual fulfillment. Is the church bad. Of course not. It is God ordained and Christ owned and built. It is simply an inadequate substitute for the Savior. It is intended as a gift to those who find their Lord Jesus sufficient. It is a solace in a fallen world. It is the family that loves us unconditionally. It is intended to put on display and contend for the truth of Scripture. It is alive. You are the building blocks, unless you stay away. It is a temple for a holy priesthood and you are the priests unless of course you object. The church offers spiritual sacrifices that God loves…unless of course we don’t.

**1 Timothy 3:15**  15 but in case I am delayed, *I write* so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.

**1 Peter 2:5** you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

**Conclusion:** This is why so much of Christianity is silently asking, “Why do I come away from church unchanged. How come the Bible does not thrill me and interest me? And why has my salvation become a routine rather than the joy of my life. Where is God in all this?” God is seen, known and experienced in the person of Christ Jesus.

**2 Corinthians 5:19 …** God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

He is offering us intimacy with His Son not programs, facilities and education. And certainly not through rituals and self-defined morality. He is telling us to stay close to Jesus and also close to one another. The world is passing away. Man-made religion is failing all men. Everything is old and lifeless in this world apart from Christ. Why hasn’t the Church died off then? Because millions have kept their eyes on Christ. Kept their heart on the treasure that is Christ. Not on heaven but on Jesus Christ. They lives witness that there is hope and joy and meaning in this world for the children of Christ. They are cheering us on as we enter the stadium in the marathon known as life. The finish line is in view only keep your eyes on Christ and your heart will not grow cold!

**Hebrews 12:1-2**  Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.