

Main Idea: Hebrews 7:4-10 uses Melchizedek to teach us about Christ, indeed, to challenge us to come to grips with the supremacy of Christ in our lives.

I. Melchizedek was great.

- A. Melchizedek received a tithe from Abraham (4-6a).
 - 1. The Law required that God’s people give to the Levitical priests.
 - 2. Melchizedek wasn’t a Levitical priest.
 - 3. Melchizedek received the gift, not because of a position he inherited, but because of who he was.
- B. Melchizedek gave a blessing to Abraham (6b-7).
 - 1. You need to know that Abraham received God’s promises.
 - 2. You need to know there’s someone greater than Abraham.
- C. Melchizedek is declared to be living (8).
 - 1. The problem with human priests is that they die.
 - 2. The need is for a priest who remains alive.
- D. Melchizedek, through Abraham, received a tithe from Levi (9-10).
 - 1. Be careful against worshipping your theological system.
 - 2. Make sure your system keeps the main thing the main thing.

II. Christ is the greatest.

- A. He is the priest who alone can take us to God.
- B. He is the king who alone deserves our trust and allegiance.

Take Inventory: Let’s ask ourselves the following questions.

- 1. What beliefs am I holding that need to change?
- 2. What practices am I following that need to change?
- 3. What most needs to happen today so that Christ is the greatest in my life?

Worship involves *thinking* and meaningful worship involves the willingness to *think deeply*. That’s actually a controversial statement. Ponder it carefully. Yes, worship involves singing which we’ve done this morning. And giving our tithes and offerings which we’ve also had occasion to do. And worshipping with our lives as we’ll be doing this week. But worship also involves (indeed it requires) *thinking*.

Did you come to church today prepared to think deeply, carefully, precisely? For many people, a worship service is place to go to receive an emotional pick-me-up. Oh sure, we need to think, but not too deeply. That’s why we use video clips for our short attention spans, and special lighting effects and music in the background and smoke and so forth. To create a mood. Because we’re here to *feel* something.

But all that actually short circuits worship. Meaningful worship not only involves but *requires* the willingness to think deeply. If we’re not willing to think deeply our worship will end up being shallow and flat.

Is this simply my opinion? No. As we’ll see today, it’s actually the conviction of the writer of Hebrews. The book of Hebrews is essentially a worship manual. Hebrews is showing us that Christ is worthy of our all. But it doesn’t take long to notice that we can’t read Hebrews the way we read Psalm 23 or John 14. Immediate application jumps from the page in those passages. But not in Hebrews. We have to think carefully. We have to engage our minds and ask questions and search for answers.

Is the effort worth it? Is there blessing on the other side of this thinking exercise? Will there be feelings and emotion? Absolutely! Our capacity to know and worship and

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¹ For a previous look at this passage, see the Hebrews series preached at WBC in 2008.

enjoy Christ will be heightened and deepened. But there's no short cut to arriving at this destination. We must *think deeply*.

Last week we returned to our expositional series in Hebrews. As I mentioned, we're exploring Hebrews in sections. We began in 2025 with *Behold the Son* examining chapters 1-2. Then we began 2026 with *Rest in the Son* (chapters 3-6). Now we're *Going Deeper into The Son* (chapters 7-9). As we prepare for today's text, I invite you to put on your thinking caps. We will certainly need them and benefit from wearing them.

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 7:4-10

How would you answer the question, "Of all your experiences in life, what have you enjoyed most?" Go ahead, pick your top three or four. I think of the privilege of meeting, marrying, and spending my life with Sherry, of bringing into the world and raising our two daughters, of becoming a grandparent, of shepherding this congregation for nearly four decades, for starters. How about you? What may be quite revealing, however, is what *didn't* make it on our list.

Joe Stowell, former pastor and college president, shares the following story in his book, *I Would Follow Jesus*:

The meal was just about finished when I leaned over and asked Billy Graham the question I had hoped to ask him all evening.

Martie and I had been seated next to Dr. Graham at a dinner for the staff and board of his organization. Billy, eighty at the time, was lucid and interesting. Wondering what he would say about his highest joys in life, I asked, "Of all your experiences in ministry, what have you enjoyed most?"

Then (thinking I might help him out a little), I quickly added, "Was it your time spent with presidents and heads of state? Or was it—"

Before I could finish my next sentence, Billy swept his hand across the tablecloth, as if to push my suggestions onto the floor.

"None of that," he said. "But far the greatest joy of my life has been my fellowship with Jesus. Hearing Him speak to me, having Him guide me, sensing His presence with me and His power through me. This has been the highest pleasure of my life!"

It was spontaneous, unscripted, and clearly unrehearsed. There wasn't even a pause.

With a life full of stellar experiences and worldwide fame behind him, it was simply Jesus who was on his mind and on his heart. His lifelong experience with Jesus had made its mark, and Billy was satisfied."²

We're prone to get distracted, aren't we? I know I am. Getting married, having kids, loving your work, all great blessings for sure. But these God-given gifts can so easily usurp the place of the Giver in our lives. Indeed, I'll never be the kind of husband, father, and pastor God intended me to be as long as I'm fuzzy on the issue of what's most important in my life.

That's where the book of Hebrews can help us. The theme of Hebrews is the supremacy of Jesus Christ. The writer of this letter is seeking to encourage a group of people, Jewish converts to Christianity, who were wavering in their faith. They were getting distracted from their calling and even pondering going back to their old ways.

How do you help people like that? As the writer demonstrates, the best thing you can do is show them what they have in the matchless person of Jesus the Christ.

² Joe Stowell, *I Would Follow Jesus*, pp. 27-8.

Who is Jesus? At the beginning of the book the writer announces that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the creator of the universe (1:2), the exact representation of God's being, the One who provided purification for man's sins and returned to His throne in heaven (1:3). As such He is superior to all other authority figures, including angels (as he teaches in chs 1-2), Moses (in chs 3-4), and the priests of Levi (chs 4-7).

If we have a small view of Jesus, we won't cherish Him as we ought, especially when the distractions come. We need to think rightly about Jesus, to see Him as the supreme one. And the writer of Hebrews says that Melchizedek can help us do that. Indeed, five times the writer of Hebrews declares that Christ is **"a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek"** (5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:11, 17). Who is Melchizedek? In our God-breathed text, Hebrews 7:4-10, the Holy Spirit uses Melchizedek to teach us about Christ, indeed, to challenge us to come to grips with the supremacy of Christ in our lives. Our passage lays before us two big ideas. One, Melchizedek was *great*. Two, Christ is the *greatest*!

I. Melchizedek was great.

The writer says in verse 4, "See how great this man was." The NIV, "Just think how great he was." Please note that God's Word commands us to see, think about, give attention to, ponder the greatness of this mysterious man Melchizedek. As we learned last time from verses 1-3, Melchizedek was the king and priest of Salem (Jerusalem) around the year 2,000 BC.

Verse 3 indicates that "like the Son of God he remains a priest forever." That phrase is key. What makes Melchizedek great, according to Hebrews, is a similarity he bears with the Son of God. *Like* the Son of God, he remains a priest. It doesn't say he *is* the Son of God, but that there's something about him that points us to the Son of God.

In biblical studies, this connection is summed up in the word *type*. The writer of Hebrews says that the Old Testament portrait of Melchizedek is a type of Christ.

Perhaps an illustration will help. We have two portraits hanging in our living room which were painted by mouth by our dear sister in Christ and quadriplegic Nancy Rae Litteral. It's not uncommon that when visitors come, the portraits capture their attention and they say, "Is that Julie and Katie?" And of course, the technical answer is, "No, that's not Julie and Katie," for those are just *portraits* made of canvas and ink and not real people. But we know what the visitor means and so we say, "Yes, that's Julie and Katie when they were little girls." And we're being truthful for a picture is a representation, a *type*, of a person.

Melchizedek is a *type* of Christ, a portrait that God the Holy Spirit painted into His Word two thousand years prior to Christ's coming to earth. Rather than using ink and canvas, the Holy Spirit used the life and actions of an ancient Middle-eastern king-priest to foreshadow what the ultimate king-priest would accomplish.

Raymond Brown explains, "Although this particular use of typology may not be common today, it was thoroughly familiar to our author and to many of his contemporaries. We must try to enter into their thought world, and in doing so we shall realize how helpful this form of interpretation was to them. The occasional intricacy of his argument must not be allowed to obscure the commendability of his aim. He genuinely desires to magnify Christ and do it in such a way as to help his contemporaries to understand the superiority of Christ's priesthood when set alongside the Levitical priesthood."³

³ Raymond Brown, p. 126.

Yes, as the New Testament writers demonstrate over and over, we can see Christ *in the Old Testament*. Raymond Brown says it well, “Old Testament Scripture is essentially Christ-centered... It eagerly anticipates his coming, it describes his earthly ministry, vividly relates the precise circumstances and eternal benefits of his death for mankind, and looks beyond itself to the eventual fulfillment of its finest hopes... It is a book about Christ. The Son of God dominates the word of God in both Testaments. The marks of Christ are clearly impressed on all its pages for those who have the eye to see them.”⁴

So if we want to know Christ better, here’s something we can do. Think about Melchizedek. *Just think how great he was*, says Hebrews. And to help us, the writer points out four indicators of Melchizedek’s greatness.

A. Melchizedek received a tithe from Abraham (4-6a). Verse 4 says, “See how great this man was to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth of the spoils!”

Nearly half the world’s population would attest to Abraham’s greatness. Jews, Christians, even Muslims venerate him. Even children sing songs about him. I can still remember marching to “Father Abraham had many sons”. His name appears 294 times in our Bibles. He is indeed *the patriarch*.⁵

But Melchizedek? We’re told very little about him. He’s mentioned in only three passages. And yet, Abraham gave him a tithe. We find the account in Genesis 14. When Abraham returned from rescuing his nephew Lot in the battle described, the king of Salem (probably Jerusalem) met him with bread and wine. And Abraham responded by giving him a tenth of all the “plunder.”

Interesting word. The Greek word for ‘plunder’ (*akrothinion*) is comprised of two smaller words: *akros* (‘top’) and *this* (‘heap’), literally, “the top of the pile.” In other words, Abraham gave Melchizedek the first and the best part of the goods.

With that in mind, the writer of Hebrews reminds his readers of what the Mosaic law said about tithing. In verse 5, “Now the law requires.” That’s the way the law works. It *requires*. It’s black and white. It sets down *requirements*, and here is one of them.

The Law required that God’s people give to the Levitical priests. Verse 5 continues, “And those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment in the law to take tithes from the people, that is, from their brothers, though these also are descended from Abraham.” The NIV says it more plainly, “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.”

When Joshua conquered and distributed the promised land, the Levites (unlike the rest of the tribes) were not given an inheritance of land. Instead, they were allotted several cities along with the promise that their fellow Israelites would support them by tithes.⁶ Consequently, if you were a Jew living in the promised land, you would give the first ten percent of all your produce (indeed of all your income) to the Levites as an expression of worship in obedience to God’s Word.

Giving is a vital part of worship. Not surprisingly, the Bible has a lot to say about giving. God is a giving God who is the source of every good gift we enjoy (James 1:17).

⁴ Raymond Brown, p. 127.

⁵ The words “the patriarch” actually appear at the end of the sentence, as Morris observes, “giving it strong emphasis (i.e. ‘none less than the patriarch’).” Leon Morris, p. 64.

⁶ The Torah states in Numbers 18:20-21, “The LORD said to Aaron, ‘You will have no inheritance in their land, nor will you have any share among them; I am your share and your inheritance among the Israelites. I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the Tent of Meeting.’”

And of course, He ultimately gave us His Son. What's more, our giving God commands us to give, first to Him, and then to others.

Proverbs 3:9-10 teaches, "Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine."

The prophet Malachi rebuked God's people for not giving, saying they were "robbing God" by failing to bring their tithes and offerings to Him (Mal. 3:8).

Haggai rebuked God's people, pointing out they had enough money to build their own houses but were skimping on God's house (Hag. 1:9).

Paul offered this counsel to the new covenant people of God in 2 Corinthians 9:7, "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

Do you appreciate God and what He's given you? If we do, then His Word says that one of the ways to show that we appreciate Him (and appreciate Him even more than the *things* He's given us) is to give the first part back to Him. Giving is an act of worship. Giving is an act of obedience. Again, in the Law giving wasn't optional. If you were a Jew, the law required that you give to the Levitical priests.

Now with that in mind, notice verse 6. "But this man who does not have his descent from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises."

Melchizedek wasn't a Levitical priest. Melchizedek (who lived around 2000 BC) actually pre-dated the Levitical priesthood (who took office around 1400 BC) by six hundred years. The instructions about tithing in the Torah hadn't even been written yet (which indicates tithing was happening in the world *before* the Mosaic law stipulated it). Yet Abraham brought a tithe of his income to this priest. And this priest-king Melchizedek accepted it.

Here's the writer's point. *Melchizedek received the gift, not because of a position he inherited, but because of who he was.* Interesting point. Remember, one of the criticisms first century Jewish Christians were hearing was this. "You've turned your back on the priesthood that God established. You don't have a priest to represent you before Him."

Many of us have trouble appreciating this accusation. We've been democratized (is that a word?). We think we have inalienable rights with God. "So what if I don't have a priest?" we say. "I'm a good person. God loves me and I can approach Him any time I want, can't I?"

Good question. Can you? What does God's Word say? Jesus said in Matthew 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." Do you have a pure heart? Is your heart free from sinful thoughts, motivations, and aspirations? If you have a pure heart, then you can see God and you don't need a priest.

But that's our problem, isn't it? Concerning mankind, the Lord said in Genesis 8:21, "Every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood."⁷ That's why God graciously established the Levitical priesthood in the first place. Sinful human beings cannot approach a holy God. They need a bridge builder, a go-between a priest.

But must that priest be a Levite? That's what the first century critics were saying. The writer of Hebrews says *no*, and he uses the Hebrew Scriptures to prove the point. He reminds us that Melchizedek wasn't a Levite, yet he was a priest. Indeed, he is the priest who received an offering from the patriarch Abraham himself. And he received this gift, not because of a position he inherited, but because of *who he was*. "Just think about how great he was," says the writer.

⁷ See also Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

John Calvin offers this helpful perspective concerning the greatness of Melchizedek, “It was no ordinary occurrence that in a country possessed by so many pagan superstitions a man was found who held to the pure worship of God. He was the neighbor on the one hand of Sodom and Gomorrah, and on the other of the Canaanites, so that on every side he was hedged about by unholy men. Moreover the whole world had so fallen into godlessness that it was scarcely believable that God was truly worshipped anywhere but in the family of Abraham... It was therefore quite remarkable that there was still a king who not only preserved true religion, but himself performed the office of a priest. It was certainly necessary that everything excellent should be found in the one who was the type of the Son of God.”⁸

In verses 6-7 the writer mentions a second indicator of the greatness of Melchizedek.

B. Melchizedek gave a blessing to Abraham (6b-7). Notice verse 6 again and verse 7, “But this man who does not have his descent from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior.” To appreciate this comparison, we need to know two facts.

Fact number one, *we need to know that Abraham received God’s promises.* Abraham is the lynchpin of the whole redemptive plan of God. After destroying the wicked world in the flood and scattering the rebel world at Babel, the Lord chose Abraham and gave him these promises, recorded in Genesis 12:2-3, “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

Through *you*, said God to Abraham. I’m going to bless the world *through you*. I’m going to give you a son, and through that son I’m going to form a nation, and through that nation I’m going to bless all the peoples of the world. Those were God’s promises, and he gave them to Abraham.

And yet as important as Abraham was and is in God’s redemptive plan, consider this. Fact number two. *We need to know there’s someone greater than Abraham.* The one who gives the blessing is greater than the one who receives it, right? To give anything, you must first possess it. To give a divine blessing, you must have the authority and clout of God Himself. “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth,” said Melchizedek in Genesis 14:19. This priest could not have offered that blessing had he not possessed the authority to give it.

But suppose he didn’t. Suppose Melchizedek gave that blessing without the Lord’s approval. Can we be sure he wasn’t a fraud like Baalam who used the Lord’s name in vain? Yes, we can be sure. How? Yahweh Himself gave testimony to the validity of Melchizedek’s blessing. Where? In Psalm 110:4, “The LORD [Yahweh] has sworn and will not change his mind [here is the Lord’s assessment]: ‘You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.’”

“We are Abraham’s seed,” the critics were saying. That’s fine, said the writer of Hebrews, for Abraham was a great man who received God’s promises. But even Abraham acknowledged there was a priest, a non-Levitical priest, greater than him.

How great was Melchizedek? He received a tithe from Abraham. He gave a blessing to Abraham. Here’s a third indicator.

C. Melchizedek is declared to be living (8). Verse 8 says, “In the one case tithes are received by mortal men, but in the other case, by one of whom it is testified that he lives.” The writer of Hebrews is making a contrast here. *In the one case*, he says,

⁸ John Calvin, p. 88.

referring to how things functioned under the Mosaic law. Under the law the Levitical priests collected the tithes from the Israelites. But all those men had something in common, namely, they died.

The problem with human priests is that they die. He can help you today, but he might be dead tomorrow. And that's the way it was for fourteen centuries, from the first priest Aaron right on to the first century with Caiaphas. They all died. *The need is for a priest who remains alive.*

Notice the other side of the contrast. *But in the other case*, says the writer. Now he is referring to Melchizedek. He too collected a tithe, but unlike the Levitical priests who died, Melchizedek is "declared to be living" (NIV). "It is witnessed that he liveth," says the KJV. "He lives," says the ESV.

What's the writer saying? He's taking us back to the story. When we read Genesis 14 we find no record that Melchizedek died. He just appears in the narrative, blesses Abraham, and then passes from the scene. There's no genealogical record of his birth or his death. It's not because he wasn't born (or he wouldn't be human), and not because he didn't die (for all humans die as Hebrews 9:27 will emphasize). It's because Moses (who was writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) didn't include that information.

As Leon Morris observes, "The writer does not say that Melchizedek lives on but that the testimony about him is that he lives. Once more he is emphasizing the silences of Scripture to bring out his point."⁹

When we read about Melchizedek in Genesis 14, we don't see any mention of his death. He is just as alive when he exits the story as when he enters it. And it's because of this that he provides a beautiful portrait, a type, of another priest who would one day come, live, and remain alive. And this time it's not because the biblical text didn't tell the rest of the priest's story, for it did. This priest did die, and this priest conquered death and the grave, and this priest lives and remains forever a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

But there's more. There's one more indicator of the greatness of the type.

D. Melchizedek, through Abraham, received a tithe from Levi (9-10). Notice verses 9-10, "One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him." Keep your thinking caps on! Let's follow the writer's reasoning. His beginning phrase, "one might even say," is unusual. Morris explains that this expression "serves to introduce a statement which may startle a reader, and which requires to be guarded from misinterpretation."¹⁰ Gromacki says, "The author...declared a biblical truth which could never be detected from the historical events or characters."¹¹

What is this truth that we would never pick up from reading the Genesis 14 account? It's that Levi was there and that *he* was paying the tithe to Melchizedek.

How could that be? Levi was Abraham's great-grandson. It was from Levi's tribe that the priesthood came centuries later. But we don't even read about Levi's birth until Genesis 29:34. When Abraham brought the tithe to Melchizedek, he didn't even have a son yet, let alone a great-grandson! There's no way Levi paid the tithe to Melchizedek, was there? He wasn't there, was he?

Yes, says the writer of Hebrews. In a way he was there. How? As the KJV puts it, "He was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him."

⁹ Leon Morris, p. 65.

¹⁰ Leon Morris, p. 65.

¹¹ Robert Gromacki, p. 124.

This isn't the first time the Bible indicates a connection between a person and his ancestors or descendants. Here's an example. In Genesis 25:23 Rebekah was told, "Two nations are in your womb [not just 'sons' but '*nations*']."

Here's another example, indeed the ultimate one. In 1 Corinthians 15:22 Paul says, "In Adam all die." In Romans 5:12 he says, "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned." So Adam was our *federal head*, to borrow a phrase from the theologians. When Adam sinned, we were there. He was acting as our representative.

You say, "I'm not sure I like this doctrine of federal headship. I don't like the thought that someone else can act as my representative. It doesn't seem fair."

Okay, for starters, not liking a doctrine doesn't make it false, does it? But in this case, I believe you do like it, if you're God's child. I certainly do. Federal headship is the basis for the hope of our salvation. I'll show you. Look at the rest of Romans 5. Just five verses later Paul says this in Romans 5:17, "For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man [the federal headship of Adam], how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ."

So federal headship is good news! Just as Adam acted as our representative, so did Christ. The only difference, as Paul puts it, is that we must *receive* God's provision of grace in Christ to benefit from His work. We must put our *faith* in Christ, as Paul explains in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Notice again, when Christ died, we who were born centuries later but have believed in Him *were there in Him*. And when Christ was raised up from the dead, we too were raised up *in Him* our federal head.

Now back to the point the writer of Hebrews is making. Melchizedek, through Abraham, received a tithe from his great-grandson Levi. Philip Hughes explains it this way, "'Just as when Adam sinned those who were in his loins sinned, so when Abraham paid tithes those who were in his loins were tithed.' Both seminally and by representation Levi was present in the person of his great-grandfather on this occasion."¹²

I don't know how all this strikes you, but put yourself in first century shoes for a moment. Many then rejected Christ simply because He didn't fit into their religious box. They couldn't bear the thought of letting go of the Levitical system with its priests and offerings and regulations. These people had their well-organized traditions in place, and Christ simply didn't fit.

Is it any different today? I've invited people to come to church and learn about Jesus and they responded, "Oh, I couldn't come. I don't have the right clothes." Or, "You don't use the right Bible version." Or, "Not me. I'm not the religious type." Or, "I'm Catholic, or Lutheran, or non-denominational." Or whatever. Sinners also have a system or set of beliefs to which they cling.

Friends, I offer this word of caution to all of us. *Be careful against worshipping your system*. Having said that, should we have systems? Sure, just like a builder needs a scaffolding, we have pre-conceived thoughts and convictions. But at times a builder needs to move his scaffolding and then when the house is done take it down.¹³

¹² Philip Hughes, quoting Peter Lombard and Herveus, p. 253.

¹³ I appreciate John Calvin's comment, "From this we learn how much reverence and restraint is called for in dealing with the spiritual mysteries of God. What he [the author of Hebrews] cannot find anywhere in Scripture the apostle not only freely ignores, but wishes us also to ignore." John Calvin, p. 90.

I benefit from theological systems and use them. I would call myself a modified dispensationalist. I believe in the pre-millennial, pre-tribulational rapture position. In terms of soteriology, I believe in the position articulated by reformed theology. In terms of my view of the Bible, I embrace a nouthetic approach to counseling. I believe those things, but I need to exercise caution. And so do you. We must guard ourselves against worshipping our systems. A mob put Jesus on a cross because He didn't fit their system. Again, systems, like scaffolding, have their place. But let's always *make sure our system keeps the main thing the main thing*.

This brings us to the second big idea. Melchizedek was great. Christ is the *greatest*.

II. Christ is the greatest.

It's easy to get lost in the details of Hebrews 7. Thankfully, the writer himself gives us the big idea in Hebrews 8:1, "Now the point of what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven." There is the point of Hebrews 7. Yes, we need to think about Melchizedek for he was a great priest-king. But Christ is the greatest! Melchizedek is a means to something. Christ is the destination, the goal, the object of it all.

This careful examination of Melchizedek gives us two wonderful insights into Christ.

A. He is the priest who alone can take us to God. Jesus Himself announced, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me (John 14:6). He is the way to God.

It's because of this that Peter, standing before a hostile audience, made this bold announcement in Acts 4:12. "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

Jesus Christ is the priest who alone can take us to God. He can do that because He is a living priest. Yes, He died, but an empty grave is there to prove that He lives. But there's more. Like Melchizedek, He is not only a priest.

B. He is the king who alone deserves our trust and allegiance. Revelation 1:5 announces concerning Jesus, "Who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth." Jesus is not just a king. He is *the king* of kings. And as such, He deserves our all.

Earlier I shared a story about Billy Graham. Now let's consider another story, also told by Joe Stowell, about one of Billy's friends. According to Stowell, Charles Templeton was nearly a household name in evangelical homes back in the fifties and sixties. He pastored one of Toronto's leading churches and along with Billy Graham helped establish Youth for Christ in Canada. Pastor Templeton was in great demand as a speaker all over North America. Then he stopped speaking. Dr. Stowell explains why:

But I don't remember him for his stellar gifts. I remember him for his renunciation of the faith. Evangelicals everywhere were rocked by the news that Chuck Templeton had left his church and renounced all he had previously embraced and proclaimed. The former preacher went on to fame and fortune. He managed two of Canada's leading newspapers, worked his way into an influential position with the Canadian Broadcasting Company—even took a run at the prime minister's office.

It had been decades since I'd thought of Chuck Templeton. So imagine my surprise when I noticed he had been interviewed by Lee Strobel in his book *The Case for Faith*. After reading Templeton's most recent book, *Farewell to God: My Reasons for Rejecting the Christian Faith*, Strobel caught a plane to Toronto to meet with him. Though eighty-three and in declining health, the former preacher

vigorously defended his agnostic rejection of a God who claimed to be love, yet allowed suffering across the world to go unchecked.

Then, toward the end of their time together, Strobel asked Templeton point-blank how he felt about Jesus. Instantly, the old man softened. He spoke in adoring terms about Jesus, concluding, “In my view He is the most important human being who has ever existed.” Then as his voice began to crack, he haltingly said, “I...miss...Him!” With that, Strobel writes, tears flooded Templeton’s eyes, and his shoulders bobbed as he wept.

[And then Stowell concludes...] Think of it. Billy Graham and Chuck Templeton, two friends who chose radically different paths through life. And near the end of their journeys, one has found Jesus to be his most prized possession, while the other weeps for having left Him long ago.”¹⁴

Friends, it matters what and how we think about Jesus.

Take Inventory: Let’s ask ourselves the following questions.

1. *What beliefs am I holding that need to change?* The first readers of Hebrews had competing beliefs. Past religious traditions, *or* Christ, which will it be? How about you? Are you clinging to beliefs that need to change because they’re keeping you from Christ?

2. *What practices am I following that need to change?* Again, the first readers of Hebrews were struggling. Should we go back to our old ways where it’s safe and secure, or do we follow Christ, no matter the cost? What practices need to change in your life? Are you a people pleaser? Is the fear of man keeping you from being baptized and joining the church and taking on that ministry for which the Lord has gifted you?

3. *What most needs to happen today so that Christ is the greatest in my life?* It’s easy to say we believe He is great, but how will you show it today?

Closing Song: #363 “More Love to Thee” (all three verses)

Gideon Presentation after welcome (Gale Dalton)

Community Group Discussion:

1. We began today’s message by pondering a controversial statement. We suggested that worship involves *thinking* and meaningful worship involves the willingness to *think deeply*. Why is that statement controversial?

2. Last week we resumed our series in Hebrews. We have moved from *Behold the Son* (in chapters 1-2) to *Rest in the Son* (in chapters 3-6) and are now *Going Deeper into The Son* (in chapters 7-9). Read again today’s passage Hebrews 7:4-10. Why is the willingness to think deeply essential when we come to a passage like this?

3. The writer wants us to think carefully about Melchizedek and builds a careful argument involving him. What do we learn about Melchizedek from verse 4? From verses 5-6? What truth does he illustrate in verse 7? What point does the writer make in verses 8-10?

4. Why is knowing about Melchizedek important according to the writer of Hebrews? What do we learn about Christ from Melchizedek and how should this truth affect our lives?

5. As we did last week, let’s finish our time together by allowing this passage to guide us in a time of meaningful prayer. Keep in mind that *redeemed people pray the Word*. Have one person bring praise to the Lord for what we have learned about Him today in this passage. Have a second person express thanks for our great high priest. Have a third person bring petitions to our great high priest in behalf of those in need.

¹⁴ Joe Stowell, *I Would Follow Jesus*, pp. 28-9.