



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Joyful Endurance

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Hebrews 7:1-10

Clint Pressley

7 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, ² and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. ³ He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever. ⁴ See how great this man was to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth of the spoils! ⁵ 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,^[a] though these also are descended from Abraham. ⁶ But this man who does not have his descent from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. ⁷ It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior. ⁸ 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. ⁹ One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, ¹⁰ for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him.

(Pastor prays)

Do you ever wonder why everything seems to be so hard? Especially if you are striving to honor God with your life? Why are friendships so complicated? Why are relationships so disappointing? Why is work so frustrating and family so heartbreaking? Why? Why is being a Christian in 2022 such a struggle? Why does the world hate your morals and raise its fist at the God of the Bible? Why were some churches in Charlotte vandalized this weekend for standing for life?

Do you ever wonder what the next 50 years are going to look like for Bible-believing Christians? I think it's going to look something like what these people who received the letter in Hebrews were facing. And the preacher here is doing all he can to stiffen the spine and strengthen the resolve of his people. And as he does, he doesn't resort to pop psychology or clever stories. He takes the hammer of the Bible and the anvil of the Gospel and he forges a strong healthy church ready to joyfully endure whatever lies ahead.

And in part that's what I hope to do today using this enigmatic passage. I want to do what the author was doing using an obscure man from the Old Testament named Melchizedek to point you to Christ and to remind you that by grace and the kind Providence of God you can endure anything that awaits you. You can endure singleness, marriage, wayward kids, the death of someone close, cancer, terminal disease, a stressful job, loneliness...you name it. I want to do what the author does by God's grace and encourage you to...

Look to Christ If You Want To Last

How do we do that?

Feed your soul on the Bible

Now, we need to find out how we got here. How do we get to Melchizedek in Chapter 7? Well to do that we need a little review. Here in Chapter 5, the preacher is making his argument on the excellencies of Christ and how He is the wonderful high priest. Let's pick up the story in Hebrews 5:5-11.

⁵ So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"; ⁶ as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek." ⁷ In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. ⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. ⁹ And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, ¹⁰ being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. ¹¹ About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

So he tells his church that is on the verge of falling away: Look, you are not spiritually mature enough for me to tell you everything I know about Melchizedek. So in Chapter 5:12, he goes off into the fiercest warning in the entire Bible in Chapters 5 and 6. It's a warning about falling away, but then in the middle of Chapter 6, he gives us some encouragement. He says I don't think you are falling away, and he gives some foundational promises on Jesus and then he picks it back up with the issue of Melchizedek.

Who then is Melchizedek? He shows up first in Genesis 14:17-20. Think about the first book of the Bible. You have creation and then the fall. You have Cain and Abel, Noah and the flood, the Tower of Babel, and the call of Abraham. And then in Chapter 14, something shows up that seems odd. In Chapter 14 Abraham has gone off to rescue his nephew Lot and when he returns from this great victory, he meets Melchizedek. ¹⁷*After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's valley).* ¹⁸*And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.)* ¹⁹*And he blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; ²⁰and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!"*

So Melchizedek shows up there for a couple of verses and we never hear from him again for a thousand years. And then the psalmist is writing about the coming Savior in Psalm 110. It is a Messianic psalm depicting a conversation of God the Father to God the Son as the Messiah.

Listen to the language in Psalm 110:1-4: *The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."* ²*The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies! Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours.* ⁴*The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."*

A thousand years passes and here a pastor is talking to a predominantly Jewish congregation that is in danger of falling back into Judaism, and he reaches over and grabs this man named Melchizedek. He holds him up and says: look *through* this person to Christ.

This is amazing to me. This man shows up in the very first book of the Bible. He's gone for a 1000 years until he shows up in the book of Psalms and then is gone for another 100 years. And then this preacher picks it up by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and uses Him to strengthen a church that was waffling. This attests to the unity of the Scriptures. It attests to the truthfulness, the efficacy, the sufficiency and the inerrancy of God's Word.

The Bible is tied together without error and points us to the goodness of God found in Jesus. God's word is our foundation to stand on, it is food for our soul, and it is strength for tomorrow. And right there at the beginning of the passage it's good to remember what this pastor is doing. He's calling his people to the record of God's Word to strengthen their resolve. Your senses are bombarded all day everyday with messages that rot your soul. The TV screen, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Netflix—you just pick it—rotting your soul. And if you are eating only poison then no wonder you feel sick all the time. There are some things that need to change. Look to Christ if you want to last. Feed your soul on the Bible.

Saturate your soul with the Gospel

Let's read from Hebrews 6:20-7:3. ²⁰ *where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. 7 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, ² and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. ³ He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever.*

You see several different views of Melchizedek. He is a divine being, angelic, a human High Priest. He is a historical heavenly figure. Is he a Christophany of Christ showing up in the Old Testament? Is he a type or foreshadowing? A type is an illustration of the life and work of Christ placed there to give us insight and instruction. It's not to be obsessed over but to point us to Christ. All through the Old Testament there are those who are a type of Christ – Moses, Joshua and David.

These types point us to Christ. They show us the beauty of the Gospel. What do we mean when we say the Gospel? We say it like this: The Bible teaches that God is a holy God who created all things and created all of us in His image. But that image of God in us has been disfigured by our own sin. God is holy and just. He will punish sin, and that punishment is death. And that death is either put on us or on our substitute. Our God is also a loving God who gives us our substitute, Jesus Christ. Jesus lived perfectly and He goes to the cross to absorb the wrath of God at the cross. He takes the punishment of God for our sins and gives us His righteousness. That's the Great Exchange. That's the theology of it, but how do you apply it? You turn from sin and believe that Jesus did that for you. I'm asking you to believe the Gospel.

Raymond Brown says there are at least five ideas about Christ displayed through Melchizedek: Remember Melchizedek is the type pointing to Jesus.

The first is **status**. Melchizedek is referred to as priest: *Pontifex* or bridge builder. He points to the great bridge builder which is Christ. He bridges the gap between God and man. He is our priest.

There is also **authority**. Melchizedek was a king. So is Christ, a king. Or in verse 2 we get the **meaning** of Melchizedek's name. He is the "king of righteousness" and also the "king of peace." Christ gives us peace with God based on His righteousness. In verse 3 we learn the **uniqueness** of Melchizedek. He is presented as an argument from silence. We don't know his mother or father; we have no genealogy. This is important because we can't prove his Levitical genealogy. And the preacher here is saying: well that's the way it is in Judaism, but Melchizedek has no record. His completely unique priesthood points us to Jesus. Melchizedek is a facsimile and Jesus is the real thing. When you read verses 4-10 we have the patriarch Abraham going and meeting this person in Genesis and paying a tithe to him. And the author is saying, if that's the case then the lessor always pays tribute to the greater and the greater always blesses the lesser. Abraham, who you think of as your father as a Jew had to pay Melchizedek. The **superiority** of Melchizedek makes us look to Jesus. Hebrew 7:7 says, *It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior*. And the point the preacher is making is that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is so far above anything out there; whether it is a return to Judaism or something we face. His congregation was being tempted to return to Judaism, but we have other temptations. Our temptations have largely to do with materialism and sexuality; sometimes

laziness. I would just add in here to any person who struggles with same-sex attraction, don't think that the Gospel doesn't have something for you. The Gospel is held up and it's better. What the preacher is doing here is pressing his people to Christ and the gospel of grace, so I want to do the same. Look to Christ if you want to last. Feed your soul on the Bible. Saturate your soul with the Gospel.

Rejoice in the finished work of Jesus

Remember Melchizedek is the type that is pointing us to Christ. In verse 6:20-7:3 we see he is the priest forever and in verse 7:1 he is the priest most high. Priest – *Pontifex* – makes a bridge. So he is a priest forever that takes us to the power of the cross and the one-time sacrifice, the once and for all substitution, and here is the end of the wrath and the beginning of grace. This is the forgiveness of sin and the covenant of the love of God all wrapped up in the cross. We can never step out of the shadow of the cross, our hope and strength and renewal. The Holy Spirit of God will always bring your eyes back to the cross to remind you of the cost of your sin, and the depth of His love for you as your priest forever. Verse 7:1 says, “the priest of the most high God, *El Elyon*.” That is interesting because YHWH is the personal name of the covenant God of Israel. This priest has opened wide the offer to all people and nations. *El Elyon* is the God of everywhere and everything. Abraham is father of the Jews; Melchizedek is a reminder that Jesus isn't just the Messiah to Israel but to the world. 1 John 2:2 says, *He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world*. And the preacher is holding up Melchizedek and saying Jesus is like that. Let's rejoice that the finished work is forever. He never let go. And this is a free offer to all who will believe. It's why we keep praying for lost causes because as far as the Gospel goes, there are no lost causes. Keep praying. Mom, you don't know what God will do. Look to Christ if you want to last. Feed your soul on the Bible. Saturate your soul with the Gospel. Rejoice in the finished work of Jesus.

Gladly submit to the authority of Christ

Let me show you where I get this as the writer presses us to look through Melchizedek on to Christ. Look at the description of Melchizedek in verses 1-2. *For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, ² and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of*

his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. King of Salem. Priest of the most high God.

Verse 2 says he is the king of righteousness, king of Salem and king of peace. King and Priest, no other in the entire Bible speaks to the unparalleled, unique authority of Christ and we need to submit joyfully to that. The king of Salem means king of “shalom,” king of peace. It’s in the name of Jerusalem. God had a king many centuries before David was in Jerusalem. God had a priest many centuries before Aaron, John Owens says, guided by some providence who gave the name of “peace” to that city because there in the fullness of time He would accomplish His great work of peacemaking at the cross of Jesus.

Let's read verse 2 again and see that He is called the king of righteousness and peace. ²*and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace.* First the king of righteousness and then the king of peace. The preacher is showing us how this person, Melchizedek, represents Christ and, more specifically, His kingly office. He is the king first of righteousness and then peace. Christ is the author of righteousness, the earner of righteousness and the dispenser of righteousness. And that righteousness that He gives us is what creates peace. He is the maker and giver of Peace. Peace doesn't precedent righteousness; righteousness must go first and then peace will follow. Colossians 1:20 says, *and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.* It's why Paul could say in Romans 5:1, *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

I want you to flourish. I want you to last. Look to Christ if you want to last. Feed your soul on the Bible, saturate your soul in the Gospel. Rejoice in the finished work of Jesus and gladly submit to the authority of Christ. What are you feeding your soul? What is your soul saturated with, stress? Anxiety? Envy? Is the finished work of Jesus applied to your heart? Have you submitted to the lordship of Christ?

(Pastor prays)