

Lesson 7

Hebrews 7

Jesus, The High Priest We Need

1. Using passages from Heb. 7:1-10 and Genesis 14:13-24: What do we know about Melchizedek? (CCC# 58 & 1544)

Hebrews 7:1-10

1 This “Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of God Most High,”* “met Abraham as he returned from his defeat of the kings” and “blessed him.” **2** And Abraham apportioned to him “a tenth of everything.” His name first means righteous king, and he was also “king of Salem,” that is, king of peace. **3** Without father, mother, or ancestry, without beginning of days or end of life,* thus made to resemble the Son of God, he remains a priest forever. **4** See how great he is to whom the patriarch “Abraham [indeed] gave a tenth” of his spoils. **5** The descendants of Levi who receive the office of priesthood have a commandment according to the law to exact tithes from the people, that is, from their brothers, although they also have come from the loins of Abraham. **6** But he who was not of their ancestry received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had received the promises. **7** Unquestionably, a lesser person is blessed by a greater. **8** In the one case, mortal men receive tithes; in the other, a man of whom it is testified that he lives on. **9** One might even say that Levi* himself, who receives tithes, was tithed through Abraham, **10** for he was still in his father’s loins when Melchizedek met him.

Genesis 14:13-24

13 A survivor came and brought the news to Abram the Hebrew,* who was camping at the oak of Mamre the Amorite, a kinsman of Eshcol and Aner; these were allies of Abram. **14** When Abram heard that his kinsman had been captured, he mustered three hundred and eighteen of his retainers,* born in his house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. **15** He and his servants deployed against them at night, defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. **16** He recovered all the possessions. He also recovered his kinsman Lot and his possessions, along with the women and the other people. **17** When Abram returned from his defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were allied with him, the king of Sodom went out to greet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King’s Valley). **18** Melchizedek, king of Salem,* brought out bread and wine. He was a priest of God Most High. **19** He blessed Abram with these words: “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, the creator of heaven and earth; **20** And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your foes into your hand.” Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything. **21** The king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the captives; the goods you may keep.” **22** But Abram replied to the king of Sodom: “I have sworn to the LORD, God Most High, the creator of heaven and earth, **23** that I would not take so much as a thread or a sandal strap from anything that is yours, so that you cannot say, ‘I made Abram rich.’ **24** Nothing for me except what my servants have consumed and the share that is due to the men who went with me—Aner, Eshcol and Mamre; let them take their share.”

CCC58

58 The covenant with Noah remains in force during the times of the Gentiles, until the universal proclamation of the Gospel. The Bible venerates several great figures among the Gentiles: Abel the just, the king-priest Melchisedek - a figure of Christ - and the upright "Noah, Daniel, and Job". Scripture thus expresses the heights of sanctity that can be reached by those who live according to the covenant of Noah, waiting for Christ to "gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad".

CCC1544

1544 Everything that the priesthood of the Old Covenant prefigured finds its fulfillment in Christ Jesus, the "one mediator between God and men." The Christian tradition considers Melchizedek, "priest of God Most High," as a prefiguration of the priesthood of Christ, the unique "high priest after the order of Melchizedek"; "holy, blameless, unstained," "by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified," that is, by the unique sacrifice of the cross.

2. A. Using the above passages, how did Abraham regard Him?

B. What is the main point in comparison between Melchizedek and Abraham?
3. *Challenge Question:* Do you think Melchizedek could have been the pre-Incarnate Christ or was he another person? Why?
4. Jesus inaugurated a new era and set aside the old. Why is another type of priesthood needed? (vs.11-17)
11 If, then, perfection came through the levitical priesthood, on the basis of which the people received the law, what need would there still have been for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not reckoned according to the order of Aaron? 12 When there is a change of priesthood, there is necessarily a change of law as well. 13 Now he of whom these things are said* belonged to a different tribe, of which no member ever officiated at the altar. 14 It is clear that our Lord arose from Judah,* and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. 15 It is even more obvious if another priest is raised up after the likeness of Melchizedek, 16 who has become so, not by a law expressed in a commandment concerning physical descent but by the power of a life that cannot be destroyed. 17 For it is testified: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

5. In what sense were the ancient rules of the Jews “weak” and useless? (vs.18-19 and CCC #1540)

18 On the one hand, a former commandment is annulled because of its weakness and uselessness, 19 for the law brought nothing to perfection; on the other hand, a better hope* is introduced, through which we draw near to God.

1540 Instituted to proclaim the Word of God and to restore communion with God by sacrifices and prayer, this priesthood nevertheless remains powerless to bring about salvation, needing to repeat its sacrifices ceaselessly and being unable to achieve a definitive sanctification, which only the sacrifice of Christ would accomplish.

6. What two features of the Jewish religious system have been superseded? (CCC#1366)

1365 Because it is the memorial of Christ's Passover, the Eucharist is also a sacrifice. The sacrificial character of the Eucharist is manifested in the very words of institution: "This is my body which is given for you" and "This cup which is poured out for you is the New Covenant in my blood." In the Eucharist Christ gives us the very body which he gave up for us on the cross, the very blood which he "poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

1366 The Eucharist is thus a sacrifice because it re-presents (makes present) the sacrifice of the cross, because it is its memorial and because it applies its fruit:

[Christ], our Lord and God, was once and for all to offer himself to God the Father by his death on the altar of the cross, to accomplish there an everlasting redemption. But because his priesthood was not to end with his death, at the Last Supper "on the night when he was betrayed," [he wanted] to leave to his beloved spouse the Church a visible sacrifice (as the nature of man demands) by which the bloody sacrifice which he was to accomplish once for all on the cross would be re-presented, its memory perpetuated until the end of the world, and its salutary power be applied to the forgiveness of the sins we daily commit.

Read vs. 21-25, what does the permanence of Christ's priesthood make possible for us?

21 but he with an oath, through the one who said to him: "The Lord has sworn, and he will not repent: 'You are a priest forever'"—22 to that same degree has Jesus [also] become the guarantee of an [even] better covenant. 23 Those priests were many because they were prevented by death from remaining in office, 24 but he, because he remains forever, has a priesthood that does not pass away. 25 Therefore, he is always able to save those who approach God through him, since he lives forever to make intercession for them.

8. Twice the writer tells us to come to God through Christ's high priesthood (vs. 19,25). Why do we need to do this?

19 for the law brought nothing to perfection; on the other hand, a better hope* is introduced, through which we draw near to God.

25 Therefore, he is always able to save those who approach God through him, since he lives forever to make intercession for them.

9. What about Christ's character and sacrifice sets him far above other earthly priests (vs.26-28)? (CCC#827)

26 It was fitting that we should have such a high priest:* holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, higher than the heavens. 27 He has no need, as did the high priests, to offer sacrifice day after day,*n first for his own sins and then for those of the people; he did that once for all when he offered himself. 28 For the law appoints men subject to weakness to be high priests, but the word of the oath, which was taken after the law, appoints a son, who has been made perfect forever.

827 "Christ, 'holy, innocent, and undefiled,' knew nothing of sin, but came only to expiate the sins of the people. The Church, however, clasping sinners to her bosom, at once holy and always in need of purification, follows constantly the path of penance and renewal." All members of the Church, including her ministers, must acknowledge that they are sinners. In everyone, the weeds of sin will still be mixed with the good wheat of the Gospel until the end of time. Hence the Church gathers sinners already caught up in Christ's salvation but still on the way to holiness:

The Church is therefore holy, though having sinners in her midst, because she herself has no other life but the life of grace. If they live her life, her members are sanctified; if they move away from her life, they fall into sins and disorders that prevent the radiation of her sanctity. This is why she suffers and does penance for those offenses, of which she has the power to free her children through the blood of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit

10. How does Jesus' non-stop prayer for you help you to hold firmly to your faith and persevere in the race?

