

# Jesus, the Faithful Priest



Week Six

## inTro



Read This Week's Passage:  
Hebrews 5:1–10; 7:1–28

### BRIDGING THE GULF

The gulf that existed between God and us was caused by sin. The problem is by sin corrupting the natural world. God is holy, and sin cannot exist in His presence; so, our sin has separated us from God, just as two magnets in the wrong orientation repel each other. In addition, our sinful nature made it impossible for human beings to obey God's law. Sin also involves misunderstanding. Human beings lost sight of the love and mercy of God and came to see Him as wrathful and demanding.

This week, we are going to study the amazing things the Father and the Son did to bridge that gulf. Hebrews 5–7 provides a careful analysis of Jesus' priesthood. The author explains its origin and purpose (Heb. 5:1–10) and then exhorts readers not to disregard it (Heb. 5:11–6:8) but rather to hold fast to the assurance of hope it provides (Heb. 6:9–20). He also explains the characteristics of Jesus' priesthood (Heb. 7:1–10) and its implications for God's relationship to believers (Heb. 7:11–28). This week we will focus specifically on Hebrews 5:1–10 and Hebrews 7:1–28.



## **inScribe**

Write out Hebrews 5:1–10; 7:1–28 from the Bible translation of your choice. If you're pressed for time, write out Hebrews 7:21–28. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the chapter.

## inGest



Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

**Circle** repeated words/phrases/ideas

**Underline** words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you



Draw **Arrows** to connect words/phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?

—————→  
Memorize your favorite verse in Hebrews 5:1–10; 7:1–28. Write it out multiple times to help with memorization.

What does the revelation about Melchizedek teach us about how God works among those who have never had human missionaries preach to them?



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## THE PRIESTHOOD OF MELCHIZEDEK

The basic purpose of a priest is to mediate between sinful people and God. Priests were appointed by God to minister on behalf of human beings; therefore, they needed to be merciful and understanding of human weaknesses.

In Hebrews 5:5–10, Paul shows that Jesus perfectly fulfills those purposes: God appointed Him (Heb. 5:5, 6) and, too, Jesus understands us because He also became human and suffered (Heb. 5:7, 8).

There are some important differences, however. Jesus was not “chosen from among men” (Heb. 5:1, ESV). Instead, Jesus adopted human nature in order to, among other things, serve as a priest in our behalf. Jesus did not offer sacrifices for His own sins (Heb. 5:3) but only for our sins, because He was sinless (Heb. 4:15; 7:26–28).

Hebrews says that Jesus prayed “to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard” (Heb. 5:7, NKJV). Hebrews is referring to the second death, from which God saved Jesus when He resurrected Him (Heb. 13:20). Hebrews also says that Jesus “learned obedience through what he suffered” (Heb. 5:8, ESV). Obedience was new to Jesus, not because He was disobedient but because He was God. As sovereign over the universe, Jesus did not obey anyone; instead, everyone obeyed Him.

Jesus’ sufferings and death on the cross are an essential part of His priestly ministry. Sufferings did not perfect Jesus in the sense that He improved morally or ethically. Sufferings did not make Him merciful. To the contrary, Jesus came to this earth because He always was merciful, which is why He had compassion on us (Heb. 2:17). What Hebrews means is that it was through sufferings that the reality of Jesus’ brotherly love, the authenticity of His human nature, and the depth of His submission as representative of humanity to the will of the Father were truly expressed and revealed. He was “perfected” in the sense that His sufferings qualified Him to be our High Priest. It was His life of perfect obedience, and then His death on the cross, that constitute the sacrificial offering that Jesus presented before the Father as our priest.

Genesis 14:18–20 and Hebrews 7:1–3 mention the character of Melchizedek, who was both a king and priest and was also superior to Abraham, since Abraham paid him tithes. Likewise, Jesus is king and priest (Heb. 1:3); unlike Melchizedek, however, Jesus was sinless (Heb. 7:26–28).

Hebrews 7:15 explains that Jesus was priest “in the likeness of Melchizedek.” (NKJV). This is what the earlier expression in Hebrews, “according to the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 5:6, NKJV), means. Jesus was not a successor of Melchizedek, but His priesthood was similar to his.

For instance, Paul says that Melchizedek was without father, mother, genealogy, birth, and death. Some have suggested that Melchizedek was an incarnation of Jesus in the time of Abraham. But this thought does not fit the argument of Hebrews. Melchizedek “resembles” Jesus (see ESV), which implies that he was different from Jesus (Heb. 7:3).

It has also been suggested that Melchizedek was a heavenly being, but this would destroy the argument of Hebrews. If Melchizedek were without father, mother, beginning, or end, he would be God Himself. This poses a problem. Melchizedek’s heavenly, fully divine priesthood would have preceded the ministry of Jesus. If this were the case, as Hebrews says, “what further need would there have been for another priest to arise” (Heb. 7:11, ESV)?

Instead, Hebrews uses the silence of Scripture regarding Melchizedek’s birth, death, and genealogy to build a *typology*, or symbol, for Jesus’ priestly ministry (Gen. 14:18–20) and for the fact that Jesus Himself was eternal. In short, Melchizedek was a Canaanite king-priest who served as a type of Christ.

## A BETTER PRIESTHOOD

Priests are mediators between God and human beings. Hebrews says, however, that Levitical priests could not provide complete, confident access to God because they could not provide perfection (Heb. 7:11, 18, 19). After all, they themselves weren't perfect, so how could they somehow bestow perfection upon others?

Nor could the animal sacrifices cleanse the conscience of the sinner. Their purpose was to point forward to the ministry of Jesus and His sacrifice, which alone would provide true cleansing from sin (Heb. 9:14; 10:1-3, 10-14). The function of the Levitical priests and their sacrifices was temporary and illustrative. Through their ministry, God wanted to lead the people to put their faith in the future ministry of Jesus, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29, NKJV).

Hebrews 7:12 explains that the change of priesthood made a change in the law necessary. Why? Because there was a very strict law that prohibited a person who was not from the line of Levi through Aaron from serving as a priest (Num. 3:10; 16:39, 40). Hebrews 7:13, 14 explains that Jesus was from the line of Judah, and so this law prohibited Him from being a Levitical priest. So, Paul argues that the appointment of Jesus as priest meant God has changed the law of the priesthood.

Jesus' coming also implied a change in the law of sacrifices. Sinners were required to bring different kinds of sacrifices to obtain atonement (Leviticus 1-7), but now that Jesus has come and offered a perfect sacrifice, the law of animal sacrifices has also been put aside (Heb. 10:17, 18) as a result of the new covenant and the fuller revelation of the plan of salvation.

According to Hebrews 7:16, Jesus received the priesthood on the basis of an indestructible life and because He holds an eternal ministry. The implications of these facts are astounding. It means that Jesus' ministry will never be surpassed or outclassed. Jesus saves completely, eternally, "to the uttermost" (Heb. 7:25). The salvation that Jesus provides is total and final. It reaches the innermost aspects of human nature (Heb. 4:12; 9:14; 10:1-4). Jesus' intercession before God involves all the benefits granted under the new covenant.

It includes much more than the forgiveness of sins, too. It implies putting the law in our hearts, making us new people in Him, and leading to the dissemination of the gospel to the world (Heb. 8:10-12). As One with God and with human beings, Jesus represents us before the Father. As One who offered His life as a sacrifice, He has unwavering favor before God.

Hebrews 7:22 states that Jesus is the surety of the new covenant because God swore an oath that Jesus would be a priest "forever" (Heb. 7:21). It is very easy to fail to understand the importance of this oath. Paul had already referred to the oaths God made to the desert generation and to Abraham (Heb. 3:7-11; 6:13-15). The difference between those oaths and the oath that God has sworn to the Son is that those oaths were made to mortal human beings. Oaths stay in force as long as the beneficiaries are alive. God's oaths to the desert generation and to Abraham were binding as long as there was a desert generation and descendants of Abraham (see Gal. 3:29).

In the case of the Son, however, whose life is "indestructible," the oath God made to Him will be binding forever. A person who stood in surety or guarantee of another was liable to the same penalties as the person for whom he stood in surety, including death. Yet, the Father established Jesus as a guarantee to us that He will not default on His promises. That's how certain we can be of the salvation that we have been given in Jesus.



## inTerpret

After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks overall seem to point to?



What questions emerge after studying this passage? What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?

Think about the endless number of animal sacrifices offered through antiquity, all pointing to Jesus, and yet not one of them—or all of them—could truly pay for our sins. Why could only the death of Jesus pay for them?



Read more at  
[www.inversebible.org/heb06-4](http://www.inversebible.org/heb06-4)



What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Hebrews 3:1

Hebrews 4:14–16

Romans 8:34

Genesis 14:18–20

Psalms 110

1 Peter 2:21–25

Hebrews 8:1–3



What other verses/promises come to mind with the priesthood?

Review your memorized verse from Hebrews 5:1–10; 7:1–28.

## A SINLESS PRIEST

Hebrews 7:26 describes the several characteristics of Jesus as our High Priest. First, Jesus is “holy.” As God, Jesus is holy by nature (Lev. 11:45; 1 Pet. 1:16).

Jesus was also “undefiled.” He remained pure and untouched by evil, despite being tempted in “all points” (Heb. 2:18). Jesus’ perfect sinlessness is important. The old covenant stipulated that sacrificial victims had to be “without blemish” to be acceptable to God (Lev. 1:3, 10). Jesus’ perfect obedience during His earthly life made it possible for Him to offer Himself as an acceptable sacrifice to God (Heb. 9:14).

Jesus was “separated from sinners” when He ascended to heaven. The Greek verb tense suggests that this is a present state for Jesus, which began at a specific point in time. Jesus endured hostility from sinners during His earthly life, but He was victorious and was then seated at the right hand of God (Heb. 12:2, 3).

Lastly, Jesus was “exalted . . . above the heavens” (Ps. 57:5, 11; 108:5, ESV). It means that Jesus has been exalted above everything there is, and therefore He is one with God. In the Psalms, God is the one who is “exalted above the heavens.”

Jesus was fully human, but He was not a sinful human being as we are (Heb. 2:14–16; 4:15). Jesus is perfect because He never sinned.

Yet, because He was also fully human, He is also our example. He shows us how to run the race of life (Heb. 12:1–4). He is the example that we must follow (1 Pet. 2:21–23). Because He is “holy, harmless, undefiled separate from sinners” (Heb. 7:26, NKJV), He is our Savior, and we, too, can reflect His character.



inVite

Where do you see Jesus in Hebrews 5:1–10; 7:1–28?



How is Jesus as your perfect priest a new, strange, or familiar relationship?

What is He saying to you through these texts?

How do you see Jesus differently or see Him again?

Prayer: How do you respond to seeing Jesus in this way?



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[www.inverseible.org/heb06-6](http://www.inverseible.org/heb06-6)

Jesus, the Faithful Priest



Review the memory verse.

How does it apply to your life this week?

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After this week's study of the passage, how is Jesus your personal high priest?

What are the practical applications of having the most perfect high priest in your life?



Read more inSight from the Spirit of Prophecy at [www.inverseible.org/heb06-7](http://www.inverseible.org/heb06-7)

**OF THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK**

“The priesthood had become so corrupt that the priests had no scruples in engaging in the most dishonest and criminal acts to accomplish their designs. Those who assumed the office of high priest prior to, and at, the time of Christ’s first advent, were not men divinely appointed to the sacred work. They had eagerly aspired to the office through love of power and show. They desired a position where they could have authority, and practice fraud under a garb of piety, and thereby escape detection. The high priest held a position of power and importance. He was not only counselor and mediator, but judge; and there was no appeal from his decision. The priests were held in restraint by the authority of the Romans, and were not allowed the power of legally putting any one to death. This power rested with those who bore rule over the Jews. Men of corrupt hearts sought the distinguished office of high priest, and frequently obtained it by bribery and assassination. The high priest, clad in his consecrated and expensive robes, with the breastplate upon his breast, the light flashing upon the precious stones inlaid in the breastplate, presented a most imposing appearance, and struck the conscientious, true-hearted people with admiration, reverence, and awe. The high priest was designed in an especial manner to represent Christ, who was to become a high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec. This order of priesthood was not to pass to another, or be superseded by another.” (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, December 17, 1872, par. 12.)

“It was Christ that spoke through Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God. Melchizedek was not Christ, but he was the voice of God in the world, the representative of the Father. And all through the generations of the past, Christ has spoken; Christ has led His people, and has been the light of the world.” (White, *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, 409.)

“Christ is watching. He knows all about our burdens, our dangers, and our difficulties; and He fills His mouth with arguments in our behalf. He fits His intercessions to the needs of each soul, as He did in the case of Peter. . . . Our Advocate fills His mouth with arguments to teach His tried, tempted ones to brace against Satan’s temptations. He interprets every movement of the enemy. He orders events.” (Ellen G. White, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7 (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1957), 931.)

“It was Satan’s purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken. . . . This is the pledge that God will fulfill His word. ‘Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder.’ God has adopted human nature in the person of His Son, and has carried the same into the highest heaven. It is the ‘Son of man’ who shares the throne of the universe. It is the ‘Son of man’ whose name shall be called, ‘Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.’ Isaiah 9:6. The I AM is the Daysman between God and humanity, laying His hand upon both. He who is ‘holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,’ is not ashamed to call us brethren. Hebrews 7:26; 2:11. In Christ the family of earth and the family of heaven are bound together. Christ glorified is our brother. Heaven is enshrined in humanity, and humanity is enfolded in the bosom of Infinite Love.” (White, *The Desire of Ages*, 25, 26.)

“Christ rent not His robe as did Caiaphas. He gave up His body to be rent, to be bruised, to be wounded for the transgression of the world. As by His own choice He died in the presence of an assembled nation of worshipers, type met antitype. Priest and victim combined, He entered the Temple as a place of sacrifice. Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us. He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. He is a true high priest, for after enduring humiliation, shame, and reproach, after being crucified and buried, He was raised from the grave, triumphing over death. He is a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.” (White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 12 (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), 398.)



Share insights from this week's memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.



What have been your interactions with priesthoods in the past?

How do you explain priesthoods to those who never had any experiences with it?

Why do we need someone interceding in our behalf?

How does a perfect priesthood unite humanity "more closely . . . to God than if [it] had never fallen"? (White, *The Desire of Ages*, 25.)

How can we really experience that closeness?

What does this closeness mean on a daily level?

What comfort can we draw from this experience?

How do His "arguments in our behalf" help us have this experience?

How is the order of Melchizedek relevant today?