Intro

* + \*transition from *Yet Not I*…
    - ///////
    - We’ll be talking this morning about a figure who’s already been mentioned a couple of times in the book of Hebrews
      * He’s brought up twice in chapter 5, once in chapter 6… (\*click through)
  + **Hebrews 6:19–20 – This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.** 
    - …and 5 times in chapter 7 (please turn there)
      * He’s a central figure to the argument of the chapter, and
  + We are continuing our annual theme of **Fixing our eyes on Jesus**…
    - Today we focus on Fixing our Eyes on **Jesus, Our Eternal Priest**
      * ///////

Text

* + *Hebrews 7:1-28 –* ***7****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,****2****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.****3****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.* ***4****Now observe how great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the choicest spoils.****5****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.****6****But the one whose genealogy is not traced from them collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises.****7****But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater.****8****In this case mortal men receive tithes, but in that case one receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives on.****9****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.* ***11****Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron?****12****For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also.****13****For the one concerning whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar.****14****For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests.****15****And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek,****16****who has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life.****17****For it is attested of Him, “You are a priest forever  
    According to the order of Melchizedek.”* ***18****For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness****19****(for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.****20****And inasmuch as it was not without an oath****21****(for they indeed became priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One who said to Him, “The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, ‘You are a priest forever’”);* ***22****so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.* ***23****The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing,****24****but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently.****25****Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.* ***26****For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens;****27****who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.****28****For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever.*
    - There’s a lot going on in this passage, so we’ll need to organize our time well
      * Let’s take a look at **5 Reasons Jesus' priesthood is superior to the Levitical priesthood**
        + (\*a lot of distinctly Jewish themes so far (better than angels, Moses, high priests, etc.))
    - Let me provide a bit of background into Melchizedek as we begin our time
      * Our text starts with a sort-of introduction to him as well…
  + **Hebrews 7:1–3 – 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, 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. 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.** 
    - Apart from the Book of Hebrews, Melchizedek is only mentioned 2 other times – once in the Book of Psalms, and once in Genesis
      * The Book of Genesis is where we get our *introduction* to him, as well as the extent of our narrative *about* him
        + And for such a pivotal character, so little is said about him…
  + **Genesis 14:17–24 – Then 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). And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High. He blessed him and said, “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand.” He gave him a tenth of all. The king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself.” Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have sworn to the LORD God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, for fear you would say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’ “I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their share.”** 
    - Melchizedek’s name is two Hebrew words spliced together: Melech (king) + Tsedek (righteousness)
      * Thus, his name means King of Righteousness
        + He is described as the King of Salem (Hebrew: Shalom (peace)) and Priest of the Most High God
    - Hebrews expounds on his lineage, saying he has no mother or father, no beginning or end, and no genealogy
      * This is quite unlike the Levitical line of priests who all stemmed from Abraham, had a birth and death, and a mother or father traced back to Levi
  + Needless to say…

**I. The Order of Melchizedek is Greater**

* + Just like with the other distinctly Jewish themes already discussed in Hebrews, this may lead you to ask: why does that matte to me?
    - To get there, we’ll need to explain some further context of the passage, like the fact that…
* **A. Melchizedek received tithes from Abraham**
  + We read about this in Genesis, as well as v 4 of our passage…
* **Hebrews 7:4 – Now observe how great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the choicest spoils.** 
  + During Jesus’s earthly ministry, the religious leaders continually appealed to their lineage with *Abraham* as a trump card to their authority
    - That’s because the initial covenant and promises for God’s people were given to Abraham and his offspring
      * So if you could show that Abraham was your great X30 papa in some way, you were a part of the IN crowd
  + That’s why it’s a huge deal that Abraham paid someone else 10% of his possessions – it shows him giving deference to someone he viewed as greater than himself
    - Additionally…
* **B. Melchizedek received tithes from Levi through Abraham**
  + This one is a bit tricky, so requires a bit more background from the OT…
* **Numbers 18:20–21 – Then the LORD said to Aaron, “You shall have no inheritance in their land nor own any portion among them; I am your portion and your inheritance among the sons of Israel. “To the sons of Levi, behold, I have given all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they perform, the service of the tent of meeting.** 
  + Since the tribe of Levi were the only ones to not receive a land inheritance, they were dependent on the tithe offerings from the other tribes to sustain them
    - This also freed them up to focus on their service to the Lord and His temple/tabernacle, since God Himself was to be their inheritance
      * That system of tithing is what our passage is talking about in v 5…
* **Hebrews 7:5 – 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.** 
  + And this matter is expanded in vv9-10 of our passage…
* **Hebrews 7:9–10 – And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.**
  + This shows distinction between the two orders of priests, as well as outlining which group holds authority over the other
    - While the Levites received tithes from their nation, Melchizedek received tithes (in a sense) from the Levites
  + Then…
* **C. Melchizedek blessed Abraham**
  + Notice the preacher’s appeal to logic in this portion
    - He’s drawing plain conclusions out of the OT passage that should have been obvious to any Jewish reader…
* **Hebrews 7:6–8 – But the one whose genealogy is not traced from them collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises. But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater. In this case mortal men receive tithes, but in that case one receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives on.** 
  + This is pretty explicitly saying that Melchizedek is greater than Abraham – a point that would have been fighting words for those who had a misunderstanding of the priestly lines
    - But…
* **D. Melchizedek is a priest perpetually**
  + Recall what v 3 said about him…
* **Hebrews 7:3 – 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.** 
  + That stands in stark contrast to the conventional human line of priests, because…

**II. The Levitical Priesthood was Limited**

* + Remember from our message in chapter 5 back in March that the role of the priest was to stand as a mediator between God and humankind
    - The question I’d asked at that time was: “did God *need* to provide someone to mediate?”
      * In other words, was God obligated to install a system wherein He allows a way for rebellious, sinful humanity to find reconciliation with their holy Creator?
        + The answer was no: He could have left us to our own decision to turn away from Him
    - Instead, He instigated a system of set-apart men to function as the go-between
      * But…
* **A. The Levitical priesthood was incomplete**
  + The argument of the passage turns away from the *superiority* of Melchizedek’s order, towards the *inferiority* of the system under the old covenant
* **Hebrews 7:11 – Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron?** 
  + This point is further emphasized in vv 18 & 19…
* **Hebrews 7:18–19a – For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness (for the Law made nothing perfect), …** 
  + The old covenant, facilitated by the Mosaic Law, was not sufficient to bring mankind fully into relationship with God
    - This is underscored by the fact that…
* **B. The Levitical priesthood was temporary**
  + Verse 12 serves as the linchpin for the whole section
    - It’s the verse that allows all the rest of the argument to make sense, when you see it as the basis of what he’s getting at…
* **Hebrews 7:12–14 – For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also. For the one concerning whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests.**
  + We’ll talk about this in a bit, but because of Jesus, things would never be the same for the Hebrews
    - They couldn’t relate to God as they have before, because something (or rather, *Someone*) so much better had come along
      * But those who didn’t see the transforming work of Jesus and were stuck in the old way failed to see that…
* **C. The Levitical priests were weak and sinful.**
  + We saw back in chapter 5…
* **Hebrews 5:1–3 – For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; he can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset with weakness; and because of it he is obligated to offer sacrifices for sins, as for the people, so also for himself.** 
  + Worse yet…
* **D. The Levitical priesthood was constrained by death**
* **Hebrews 7:23 – The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing,** 
  + This cries out for a better system – one that’s not constrained by the limitations of the Law
    - Praise God that…

**III. Jesus’ Priesthood Allows Our King to Be Our Priest**

* + The Levites had a lock on the priesthood, but there was another tribe of Israel that had a special role, according to prophesy…
* **A. Jesus was from the tribe of Judah, not Levi**
  + According to Genesis 49, the ruling scepter shall not depart from the line of Judah
    - The Davidic covenant sealed that promise when David (of the tribe of Judah) was assured that he would never cease to have an offspring on the throne
      * V 13 begins a shift from Melchizedek as the main subject, and onto Christ…
* **Hebrews 7:13–14 – For the one concerning whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests.** 
  + So those from the tribe of Judah wouldn’t have been able to approach the altar as intermediaries – unless, of course, they are priests in accordance with a superior lineage to that of Levi
    - Jesus, being the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant is our King who reigns forever on His throne of total authority
      * But He also serves as our intercessory priest…
* **Hebrews 7:15–19 – And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life. For it is attested of Him, “YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK.” For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.** 
  + There’s the key right there!!
    - Who did he saw will draw near to God?
      * The High Priest?
        + Those of the Levitical priesthood?
    - NO—through *Jesus*, you and I are able to draw near to God…
      * We just talked about this during passion week – this is a work that Jesus accomplished on the cross!
  + **Matthew 27:51-52 – And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split.**
    - What was the purpose of that veil? (\*separate the holy place from the holy of holies)
      * Which begs the question: how thick is your veil? (\*explain (those who revert, reinstall the veil) + invitation?)
  + Jesus was prophesied as our King through the lineage of David, but as our priest through the lineage of Melchizedek…
* **B. The order of Melchizedek the coming priest was one with an indestructible life, not a Levitical line**
  + I mentioned there was one other Book in the Bible that mentions Melchizedek – Genesis, and Psalms
    - The Book of Hebrews references Psalm 110 a bunch of times – so often, that this Book that’s believed to be a sermon almost seems to lean on this passage as its key text
* **Psalm 110:1–4 – The Lord says to my Lord: “Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.” The Lord will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, saying, “Rule in the midst of Your enemies.” Your people will volunteer freely in the day of Your power; In holy array, from the womb of the dawn, Your youth are to You as the dew. The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, “You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.”** 
  + - \*explain further?
  + And much like our discussion from chapter 5…

**IV. Jesus’ Priesthood is Permanent**

* + This is due, in part, to the fact that…
* **A. It is based on an oath not lineage**
  + …which is highlighted in vv 20-22…
* **Hebrews 7:20–22 – And inasmuch as it was not without an oath (for they indeed became priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One who said to Him, “The Lord has sworn And will not change His mind, ‘You are a priest forever’”); so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.** 
  + The New Covenant of Jesus’ blood is infinitely superior to the Old covenant ratified by the Law…
* **B. He is the guarantee of a better covenant as He is not constrained by death**
  + Just because there were a lot more Levitical priests, doesn’t mean they were superior to the One Messiah…
* **Hebrews 7:23–24 – The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently.** 
  + And because He lives forever…

**V. Jesus’ Priesthood is Eternally Effective**

* + The old system had an expiration date, whereas…
* **A. He saves and intercedes forever**
  + For a second time, we see the *power* of Christ’s intercessory work over that of the old covenant…
* **Hebrews 7:25 – Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.** 
  + We are invited to DRAW NEAR to God through Jesus
    - What does it look like to draw near to Him?
      * ///////(\*expound)
  + Romans talks about intercession as well (\*click through)
* **Romans 8:33–34 – Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.** 
  + Additionally…
* **B. He is the perfect priest and sacrifice who offered up Himself once forever**
  + And that’s how the passage ends: with a retelling of the gospel, and an affirmation of verse 12: now that Jesus was around, there’s a full changing of the law and system…
* **Hebrews 7:26–28 – For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever.** 
  + Here’s where we can piece together why the author of Hebrews is bringing up Melchizedek and the Levitical priesthood
    - The Hebrews, or Jews, could all be ethnically traced back to Abraham, who was (humanly speaking) the father of the faith
      * Bear in mind, early Christians were primarily comprised of *Jews* who had believed *Jesus* to be the long-awaited Messiah
    - Church historian, O. C. Edwards Jr., rightly claims that the early Jews didn’t even view themselves as starting a different religion, but rather embracing Jesus as the fulfillment of Hebrew prophesies
      * So the initial difference between a believing Jew and an unbelieving Jew would have been difficult to spot, apart from a number of things these early Christians *began* to do (e.g., worship Jesus, practice baptism, the Lord’s supper, etc.) as well as some things they *ceased* to do (e.g., offer continual sacrifices, go to the Temple (as they were quickly restricted from doing), etc.)
  + Thus, there would have been a strong temptation to simply revert back to former ways—after all, what difference does it really make to pick up some old habits?
    - That’s the question right there, isn’t it? What difference has Jesus really made?
      * The author of Hebrews is trying to show how Jesus is INCOMPARABLY superior to their old way of living
        + Those who see Jesus for who He is, know that nothing can be the same once Christ has truly entered their life

There’s no going back, and how could they?

* + - All three synoptic gospels recount this event from Jesus’s earthly ministry:
      * He’s approached by a group of people who ask Him why His disciples aren’t doing what the disciples of John and the Pharisees are doing
        + This is Jesus’s reply:
  + **Mark 2:21-22 – “No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear results. No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins as well; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins.”**
    - If you try to fit Jesus into your former way of life, you find yourself quickly abandoning Jesus
      * Do you need fresh wineskins?
        + Could you say that your life consists of following Jesus wherever He leads (hence, LORD)—or is it more characterized by trying to drag Jesus along into whatever you’re doing?

I bet if you’re trying to drag him along, it’s working as well as the unshrunk piece of cloth – He’s torn away and your situation winds up worse than before

* + - There’s a better way
      * Jesus offers us to draw near to Him—not through a fickle, incomplete system like the Levitical priesthood or a different structure you may have devised—but He calls us to draw near through His love and forgiveness
        + The preacher was warning the Hebrews away from old wineskins

He did it by showing that Jesus was infinitely better than their old ways, and if they could just see JEsus for who He is, they wouldn’t be tempted to revert back

* Don’t be drawn away from Jesus by the temptations of former ways
  + Instead *draw near* to God by embracing Jesus
    - \*further appl? Tie into intro?

Conclusion

* + \*\*PRAY\*\*