

The Book of Hebrews

מְאֹנְשׁ מִנְמָה דָא מִנְהָת אַקְלָא
צְמַאַלְלָא נְתַחְצְרָה דְרַחְסָנָה סָקָה
אַחֲרַ פְּקָלָא תְּסִנְ סְרְבָּאַלְלָה
רַרְתָּא סָקָה תְּאַקְסָנָה דְמַמָּצָה
תְּאַתְּפָלָשָׁה נְתַרְדְּנָה הַרְפָּרָה נְרַלְדָה
תְּאַגְּשָׁה רַלְדָה מְלַלְצָה סָסָה תְּלָשָׁה



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Outline of Hebrews

“Jesus is Better”

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- II. Jesus Is Better Than the Angels (1:5-2:18)
- III. Jesus Is Better Than Moses (3:1-4:13)
- IV. Jesus’ Priesthood Is Better Than the Levitical Priesthood (4:14-10:18)**

Outline of Hebrews

IV. Jesus' Priesthood Is Better Than the Levitical Priesthood (4:14-10:18)

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Outline of Hebrews

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The Stunning Announcement of Psalm 110 and Its Implications (7:17–22)

- So far, the author of Hebrews has alluded to Psalm 110 a total of **seven** times in this letter (Heb 1:3, 13; 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:11, 15)!
- I've mentioned before that Psalm 110 is the Old Testament chapter **most frequently quoted** in all the New Testament.
- It's quoted by the Lord Jesus himself, for example, in a remarkable argument in Matthew 22:41-46:
 - *Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." He said to them, "How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet [Ps 110:1]'? If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?" And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.*

The Stunning Announcement of Psalm 110 and Its Implications (7:17–22)

- In the section of Hebrews that we’re examining today, the author takes *yet another* look at Psalm 110:1–4 and draws some *stunning* conclusions.
- But before we look at what the *author* of Hebrews has to say about Psalm 110, I would like for *us* to take a look at the text of Psalm 110:1–4.

Psalm 110

¹ *A Psalm of David. 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!* ³ *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.”*

¹ A Psalm of David. The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”

- If this psalm had been written by someone **other than David**, if it had been written by a courtier, for example, (which is what many liberal scholars think today **despite** what the Psalm actually says) then the **whole meaning** of the first verse **changes**.
- If this had been written by a courtier then when he says: “*The LORD* [all caps = Yahweh] *says to my Lord*...” he would be addressing the **king**.
- In which case it would sound like any other enthronement psalm. That’s how you would read it.
- But in fact, the Psalm says it **was** written by David.
- So if David, as king, now says, “*The LORD* [Yahweh] *says to my Lord* ...” the question is, “Who is **my Lord**?”

¹ *A Psalm of David. The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”*

- This has got to be the LORD (Yahweh) addressing David's Lord, i.e., Jesus.
- For this reason, many people, both Christians and Jews, understand this to be an ***oracular messianic psalm***.
- We've talked before about ***messianic*** psalms. A messianic psalm is a psalm that contained a type or figure that prophetically pointed to the promised Messiah (i.e., Jesus).
- We saw an example of a messianic psalm when the author of Hebrews cited ***Psalm 2*** in Heb 1:5.

¹ A Psalm of David. The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”

- But an **oracular** messianic psalm is a psalm that is given as an **oracle** (i.e., by direct revelation) to an Old Testament writer.
- **And** the person **referenced** in that psalm, is **not** David or a Davidic king who **prefigures** the messiah; the person referenced in an **oracular** psalm **is** the messiah.
- Whether or not David **understands** the oracle he has been given is **irrelevant** – just like the time when **Daniel** was given a direct oracular revelation and wanted to understand more, and God said, “No, seal it up, Daniel. It’s not for you. It’s for a later generation.” (Dan 12:8-9)

¹ A Psalm of David. The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”

- In **most** Davidic Psalms, David is speaking from his own heart – he is expressing his own doubts and his own fears and his own hopes and his own confidence.
- In that sense, the psalms are often psalms of **experience**, and in most **messianic** psalms they speak of David’s **personal** experience, but **at the same time**, they **point forward** to someone **beyond** David.
- But in an **oracular** messianic psalm, the person being referred to is the messiah **himself**.
- There are **several** psalms that are considered to be **oracular** – of those, Psalm 110 is the most important.

¹ A Psalm of David. The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”

- David, then, looking ahead, anticipating by God’s own revealed Word, says, “*The LORD* [Yahweh] *says to my Lord ‘Sit at my right hand...’*”
- In this context, “*sit*” is a rather ***loaded*** term:
 - It shows someone who is ***calm*** and ***unafraid*** (cf. Mic 4:4).
 - It can also suggest the idea of ***majesty and authority***. The king *sits* on his throne, and does not stand even in the presence of his nobles.
- There is also the idea that Christ’s work is ***complete***:
 - *But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.* (Heb 10:12)

¹ A Psalm of David. The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”

- “*Sit at my **right hand**...*” – To be seated at the **right hand** is to sit in the place of **honor** (cf. 1 Kings 2:19; Eph 1:20; Heb 2:9).
- “*...until I make your enemies your footstool.*”
- Ancient kings often had themselves portrayed as placing their feet on vanquished enemies (Josh 10:24)
- The idea here is that God will subjugate all of Christ’s enemies to Him.
- Of course, there is a period of time between when Christ is **enthroned** and when **all** of His enemies are subjected to Him – much like what happened to King David himself (cf. 1Kings 5:3)

² *The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter.
Rule in the midst of your enemies!*

- The idea here is that Christ is a **king** and the LORD will expand Christ's reign in ever widening circles until no foe remains to oppose His rule.
- “**Zion**” (also known as “the city of David”) referred to the city of **Jerusalem** which David took from the Jebusites and there he built a citadel and a palace (cf. 2 Samuel 5:6-11).
- In David's day Zion was the capital from which God's Davidic King ruled and went forth in conquest as we see being described in this Psalm.
- In the New Testament, **Mount Zion** becomes a type of the “heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb 12:22) from which Jesus, the **ultimate** Davidic king, goes forth conquering the nations with **His Gospel** (cf. Gal 4:25-26, Rev 21:2,10)

³ *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.*

- “*Your people will offer themselves freely*”
- This Lord is not without people.
- These people are not, however, pressed into service against their will. They offer their service “*freely*” and voluntarily.
- “*on the day of your power*” - refers to the day when He ***displays His power***. The phrase could also be translated “in the day of your campaign”.
- “*in holy garments*” - implies that such warfare as described here involved certain ***moral*** qualifications that must mark those who participate.
- “*from the womb of the morning the dew of your youth will be yours*” – a highly poetic phrase that says that just as the dew is prolifically born afresh with dawning of each new day, so those who volunteer for the Lord’s service are numerous and fresh.

⁴ *The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”*

- Then, verse 4: “*The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek”*”
- That is as spectacularly out of nowhere as Melchizedek was in Genesis 14.
- Which is *further* reason for thinking that it’s an oracular psalm.
- Most of the psalms have some kind of coherent flow to them. So much so that when you come across this verse out in left field, “*The LORD has sworn... You are a priest forever...*” you wonder what on earth is going on.

⁴ *The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”*

- That's what the writer to the Hebrews is also asking. “What is going on?”
- As we've noted before, there are **only two** places in all of the Old Testament where Melchizedek is mentioned.
- If you believe God wrote it, it's **significant** and it's **important**.
- Melchizedek is **clearly** important in Genesis 14. What makes him even **more** important is he just **pops up**!
- Now he **pops up again** in an **oracular messianic psalm** so that the one who is promised as the **ultimate King**, the one whom even mighty King David addresses as “*my Lord*,” is now addressed by **Yahweh himself** by a **divine oath** when he says, “*You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek*.”

⁴ *The LORD has **sworn** and will not change his mind, “You are a priest **forever** after the order of **Melchizedek**.”*

- Melchizedek is **not** like the priests of Levi, under the Mosaic covenant, where the priests eventually die and have to continually be replaced.
- ***This*** is the priestly order of a man whose origin and ending are not mentioned, who receives tribute ***even from Abraham*** – a man who is already a ***priest of God Most High*** early on in the book of Genesis.
- You’re a priest in ***that*** order, ***forever***, and the Lord has ***sworn*** it!
- So the author of Hebrews is not really doing anything highly creative here.
- All he’s doing is seeing that if you take this text seriously at face value, that must mean that the Levitical priesthood can’t be the last word. It can’t be.

⁴ *The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”*

- The messianic figure spoken of here unites in **one** office **king** and **priest**, and, according to Heb 1:1-2, he is a **prophet** as well:
 - *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the **prophets**, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son [the **ultimate** prophet].*
- So, in the mind of the author of Hebrews, Jesus is now clearly **prophet, priest, and king**, but if he's saying that, then he's **overturning** the Mosaic covenant in **all** of its priestly structures where those offices were kept **very distinct**!
- So with this quick look at Psalm 110:1-4 as background, let's **now** take a look at what the **author of Hebrews** has to say about this Psalm in Heb 7:17-22.

The Stunning Announcement of Psalm 110 and Its Implications (7:17–22)

¹⁷ *For it is witnessed of him, “You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.”* ¹⁸ *For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness* ¹⁹ *(for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.* ²⁰ *And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath,* ²¹ *but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever.’”* ²² *This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.*

¹⁷ For it is witnessed of him, “You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.” ¹⁸ For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness ^{19a} (for the law made nothing perfect);

- He begins by citing verse 4 of Psalm 110: “*You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.*”
- Then in verse 18 he says: “*For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside ...*” That is, the commandment establishing the Levitical priesthood. “*... because of its weakness and uselessness ...*”
- Now this doesn’t mean that the commandments of the Mosaic law had ***no power at all*** or that they ***weren’t any good***, but in terms of ***ultimately*** bringing salvation to the people, it just wasn’t ***designed*** for that.
- It ***couldn’t*** do that, the author of Hebrews tells us – “*for the law made nothing perfect.*”

^{19b} *but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.*

- “*...but on the other hand a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.*”
- This is **not** saying that people who lived and died under the old covenant could have, therefore, ignored the sacrificial system of the old covenant and gotten away with it. It doesn’t mean that.
- It clearly was the case that if they genuinely had faith in God and lived according to the revelatory Word that had been given up to that point, then they were to offer those sacrifices.
- Those were the conditions upon which forgiveness was meted out, clearly, but the question is, “Do you view those sacrifices as an end in and of themselves, **or** do you view them as **a step** in the stream of redemptive history?”

^{19b} *but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.*

- If you view the Old Testament sacrifices as a **step** within the stream of redemptive history, then you quickly realize that they didn't have saving power in and of themselves.
- That's the argument the author of Hebrews is going to make in chapter 9.
- It's the argument that says, in effect, "Can you really believe that the blood of bulls and goats finally deals with sin? Give me a break!" That's a paraphrase, but you get the idea.
- So although these things were **important** at the time they were given because God stipulated it, nevertheless, you must see that in the stream of redemptive history, those regulations cannot **possibly** be considered **ultimate**.
- In fact, the old covenant Scriptures **themselves announce** their obsolescence.

²⁰ *And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath,* ²¹ *but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever.’”*

- And more wonderfully yet, the institution of the new priesthood “**was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests** [i.e., the Levites] **were made such without an oath...**”
- There’s no oath connected with the establishment of the high priest in the Old Testament. “... **but this one** [Jesus] **was made a priest with an oath** by the one who said to him: “**The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever.’”**
- Now back in Heb 6:8 you may remember, we were told that God, **by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie**, gave a **promise** and an **oath**.
- It’s worth thinking through this business of oaths for a moment.

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- Because after all, the Lord Jesus himself had some rather shocking things to say about oaths, didn't he?
- He says in the Sermon on the Mount in Mat 5:34-37:
 - *Do not take an oath **at all**, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool... Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil.*
 - Well, if whatever you say more than 'yes' or 'no' is sin, then what's **God** doing taking an oath!? What's the **point**?
 - The point stems, and it's very important to understand this, from Deuteronomy 6.

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- In Deuteronomy 6:13, the people of God are actually **commanded** to swear by the Lord.
- The reason they're commanded to swear by the Lord, to take their oaths in the name of the Lord, is because people always take their oaths by the highest thing they know.
- So in an age and time when God's people were tempted with polytheism, it would be rather disturbing if God's people were suddenly taking their oaths in the name of the Baals or taking their oaths in the name of Asherah.
- So God commands them: “*It is the LORD your God you shall fear... and by his name you shall swear.*”
(Deut 6:13)

²⁰ *And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, ²¹ but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever.’”*

- This then becomes a mark of covenantal faithfulness because it's saying, in effect, that their highest good is Yahweh himself.
- So they take their oaths in the name of the Lord.
- The trouble is that by the time you got down to Jesus' day, there was a whole lot of theological debate going on about how oaths were to be taken.
- “So, yes, we all know when you take an oath in the name of the *Lord*, that binds you. That's holy.”
- But what about the name of the **temple**? The consensus in **that** case was, “No, not unless you swear by the **gold** in the temple.” (cf. Mat 23:16)

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- And if you take your oath by the *altar*, it's **not** binding. But if you take your oath by the *sacrifice* on the altar, **that's** binding.
- It's a bit like the kid who says, “Oh, I promise. Cross my heart and hope to die,” and then, “Ha! Ha! Doesn't count. Crossed my fingers.”
- So, the whole business of oaths ended up becoming a pious excuse for evasive lying.
- At that point Jesus comes along and says, “Let your ‘no’ be ‘no.’ Whatever more than that is sin.”
- If we're not taking oaths then oath-taking can't be a mechanism by which we're absolve ourselves from deceit.

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- Ideally, in a world where there really is integrity, oath-taking is a way of giving **confidence** to the hearer.
- That's why God puts **himself** under an oath, not because he would lie otherwise – “Dear old God is going to slip one over on us really quickly unless he puts his hand on a Bible and swears.” That's not the idea at all!
- Rather, God gives us a promise and we're such doubting fools that he puts himself under an oath so that our faith will be **enhanced**, both by the promise, and by the oath that he puts himself under, we might have **confidence**.
- And that's the frame of reference that the author brings to the text when he comments that when this high priest is announced, God **swears**, “*You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.*”

²² *This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.*

- So in verse 22 he concludes: “**This** [divine oath] *makes Jesus the guarantor of a **better** covenant.*”
- We see from this that the whole sweep of redemptive history is *altered* by this **divine oath** in an **oracular messianic psalm**.
- Because Jesus belongs to a **new** priesthood, the **old** law covenant has to go.
- This idea is discussed at greater length in the **next** chapter of Hebrews, where the author discusses the **new** covenant.
- In fact, this new and “*better covenant*” had **already** been announced some six centuries **before** Jesus, during the time of Jeremiah.
- So you see how the author is building a cumulative argument to show that if you read the Old Testament Scriptures faithfully, the Mosaic structure **within** the old covenant Scriptures **themselves** is announced to be **obsolete**.

Class Discussion Time



*Class Discussion Time

- The picture painted by Psalm 110 is that Jesus, *right now*, is ruling from his heavenly throne and is in the midst of spiritual military campaign of whereby he is conquering the world (with his gospel) by means of an army of made up of willing participants who are clothed “*in holy garments*” (i.e., whose live lives are marked by a holy character). Do you see yourself as a part of that army? And if so, what impact should this have on the way you live your Christian life?
- Do you understand how the author of Hebrews concludes that with the announcement of a new and better priesthood, the old law covenant becomes *obsolete* and *necessitates* the establishment of a *new and better covenant*? Do you see how he makes those connections?