

PASTOR'S PACKET

This is not

LEVI

A Priest Forever

Hebrews 7:1-28

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A resource for your church, given freely

BISHOP ROBERT W. LYONS, JR.

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A WORD TO FELLOW PASTORS

Pastor's Letter

This is not Levi

To the pastor holding this packet:

Hebrews 7 is one of the boldest Christological chapters in the New Testament and one of the most avoided. The argument is dense, the Melchizedek material feels strange, and the priestly categories take work to hold. But underneath the difficulty is the most complete portrait of Christ's present ministry anywhere in Scripture: a High Priest who holds His office by the power of an indestructible life, sworn in by the oath of God, who always lives to make intercession. Your people need this chapter. This packet is built so you can give it to them.

What you are holding is a complete kit to preach and deploy "This is not Levi" in your own congregation. The **Series Arc** gives you the shape and the five-week map. The **Preaching Guide** carries the argument of the text, key terms, and a preaching note for each week. The **Teacher Guide** equips your group leaders; the **Student Guide** is what the group works through together; the **Weekly Companion** keeps the chapter working in your people between gatherings. Preach on Sunday, carry it into your groups during the week, and put the Companion in your people's hands. Use the whole kit or the part that serves your context. It is built to flex.

The danger this chapter answers is quiet: a congregation that knows it is saved but does not know it is represented. Hebrews 7 settles the question every worshiper eventually asks -- who speaks for me right now -- and it settles it forever. If your people leave this series knowing they have a High Priest who has not stepped down and never will, the kit has done its work. It is an honor to put this in your hands. Preach it well.

Serving,



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Forged and first preached at The MarketPlace Movement, Dayton, Ohio.

DROP-IN SERIES OVERVIEW

Series Arc

This is not Levi

■ THE SERIES IN ONE PARAGRAPH

Hebrews 7 dismantles the entire Levitical priestly system, not to dishonor it but to show what it was always pointing toward. The argument is precise: the Levitical priesthood was never designed to last. It was designed to forerun. The priest who came after it, and before it, by the order of Melchizedek, holds His office not by genealogy and not by law but by the power of an indestructible life. The tagline carries the whole series: a priest forever (Psalm 110:4). The chapter answers the question every worshiper eventually asks, who speaks for me right now, and it answers it with finality: He always lives to make intercession.

■ WHERE IT SITS IN HEBREWS

The series resumes an argument the letter deliberately paused.

- Hebrews 5:1-10 introduces the Melchizedek priesthood.
- Hebrews 5:11-6:8 interrupts it: the readers are dull of hearing, and the apostasy warning lands.
- Hebrews 6:9-20 is the recalibration: better things, the anchor, the forerunner within the veil, declared a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.
- **Hebrews 7:1-28 is the resumption:** "For this Melchizedek..." The chapter the readers were not ready for is finally delivered.

This series stands strongly on its own, and it is the natural sequel to a Hebrews 6 series. If you have preached "Better Things" or anything from Hebrews 6, this is the door it opens.

■ THE MOVEMENT OF THE SERIES

The chapter argues in one direction: from the strange priest who has no genealogy, to the system that could not finish its work, to the indestructible life that qualifies a better priest, to the oath that secures Him, to the office that needs no successor. A congregation that walks this arc ends knowing they are represented before God by a priest who cannot die and will not step down.

■ THE FIVE WEEKS

Week 1 -- Before Abraham Was (Hebrews 7:1-3)

The strange priest of Genesis 14: no genealogy, no birth, no death. Melchizedek is not a curiosity but a type, and types exist to be filled. What do you do with a priest who exists outside every system you built to manage access to God?

Week 2 -- The System Could Not Finish the Job (Hebrews 7:11-14)

The promise of a priest of another order is itself the indictment of the first. The Levitical system was not a failure; it was a forerunner. But forerunners step aside, and the change of priesthood requires a change of law.

Week 3 -- He Lives (Hebrews 7:15-19)

The indestructible life. Every Levitical priest's tenure ended in death, and the gap was exposure. Jesus holds His office by the power of a life that cannot be broken, opening a better hope through which we draw near to God.

Week 4 -- The Oath Changes Everything (Hebrews 7:20-22)

The difference between a position held by appointment and a position secured by oath. God swore Him in by Psalm 110:4, making Jesus the guarantor, the surety, of a better covenant. The guarantee is a person, not a protocol.

Week 5 -- No Successor Needed (Hebrews 7:23-28)

Many priests, because death kept ending the office. One priest, permanent, because death could not hold Him. He always lives to make intercession. The succession question was settled before it was ever asked.

■ SUGGESTED RHYTHM

The kit is built to move as one motion through the week, and it flexes to your context:

- **Sunday message** from the week's text (the Preaching Guide carries the study layer).
- **Optional midweek deepening** for a Bible study or prayer gathering, going further into the same text.
- **Small groups** during the week, using the Teacher Guide and Student Guide.
- **Personal study** for every believer with the Weekly Companion between gatherings.

Run all four layers or only the ones that fit your church.

■ ADAPTING THIS TO YOUR CONTEXT

The message titles here are suggestions. Preach the texts in your own voice and frame them for your own congregation. The Preaching Guide gives you the exegetical backbone for each week so the substance holds wherever you take it, which matters in Hebrews 7 more than most chapters. Set the calendar to your own season. What should not change is the destination: a people who know they are represented by a priest who always lives.

WEEKLY TEACHING PREP

Preaching Guide

This is not Levi

This guide is your study layer, not a manuscript. For each of the five weeks it carries the argument of the text, the key terms worth knowing, suggested movements, and a preaching note. Hebrews 7 is a tightly reasoned chapter; do the work in your own study, then preach from what you carry, in your own voice. The Greek is given in transliteration so you can speak to it without assuming the language from the pulpit. The chapter rests on two Old Testament anchors throughout: Genesis 14:17-20 (Melchizedek meets Abraham) and Psalm 110:4 (the sworn priesthood forever). Read both before you begin.

— WEEK 1 —

■ BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS

Hebrews 7:1-3

The Argument

Verse 3 describes Melchizedek as "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God." These are not biological claims; they are claims about what the Genesis text records. In a system where priestly legitimacy depended entirely on traceable Levitical descent, the silence of Scripture about Melchizedek's origins is itself the statement. The absence is constructive: it creates a textual figure whose priesthood appears unbounded.

Watch the direction of the typology. Melchizedek is the type; Christ is the antitype. The shadow is shaped to resemble the substance, not the reverse. Note also the union of two offices, king of Salem and priest of God Most High, which the Levitical order never allowed. It required a different order.

Key Terms

- *apator, ameter, agenealogetos* -- without father, without mother, without genealogy; arguing from the silence of the Genesis text, not from biology.
- "Made like the Son of God" -- the typological arrow runs from shadow to substance; Melchizedek resembles Christ, not the reverse.
- King and priest in one person -- anomalous in Israel (see Uzziah, 2 Chronicles 26), normal in Melchizedek and in Christ.

Suggested Movements

1. The strange priest of Genesis 14; what is missing and why the absence matters.
2. The silence as argument; legitimacy without genealogy.
3. Type and antitype; Melchizedek points forward, he is not the thing itself.
4. King and priest together; the office the old order could not hold.

5. Land it: what do you do with a priest who exists outside every system you built to manage access to God?

Preaching Note

Do not let Melchizedek become a speculative puzzle. The point is not who he was in himself but what the text accomplishes by what it withholds. Keep the room on the typology, not the mystery.

— WEEK 2 —

■ THE SYSTEM COULD NOT FINISH THE JOB

Hebrews 7:11-14

The Argument

Verse 11 turns on *teleiosis*, perfection, the full accomplishment of the goal. The argument is deductive: if perfection had come through the Levitical priesthood, God would not have promised a priest of another order. The existence of the Psalm 110:4 promise proves the system never reached its goal. Be precise so the room does not hear an attack on the law: the system was not a failure, it was a forerunner that pointed past itself. Its very design, daily sacrifices and an annual Day of Atonement, confessed that the work was never finished.

Verse 12 makes a structural claim: a change of priesthood requires a change of law. Then the tribal problem (vv. 13-14): Jesus came from Judah, and Moses said nothing of priests from Judah. The disqualification is not a deficiency. It is the signal that the whole category is being replaced.

Key Terms

- *teleiosis* -- perfection, completion; the goal the Levitical system was never able to reach.
- Change of priesthood, change of law (v. 12) -- a structural claim, not an antinomian one; the two are bound together.
- The tribal problem (Judah, vv. 13-14) -- presented as evidence of a new category, not as a flaw in Jesus.

Suggested Movements

1. The logic of verse 11; the promise of another priest is the indictment of the first.
2. Forerunner, not failure; honor the system while showing its ceiling.
3. The repetition that confessed insufficiency; the Day of Atonement that had to recur.
4. Change of priesthood, change of law; you cannot get a new priest through the old system.
5. The tribe of Judah; the disqualification that signals replacement.

Preaching Note

The room will hear law-bashing if you are not careful. Guard against it. The Levitical system did its assigned work and pointed past itself; honor it as you show its limit.

— WEEK 3 —

■ HE LIVES

Hebrews 7:15-19

The Argument

Verse 16 gives the qualification that changes everything: not "a law of physical requirement" but "the power of an indestructible life," *zoe akatalutos*. The Levitical priest qualified by descent and served until death; the limitation was biological and therefore permanent, and every death required a successor. Christ holds His office on the basis of a life death could not dissolve. The resurrection is not a footnote to the priestly argument; it is the ground of it.

Verse 18 names a setting aside (*athetesis*) of the former commandment because of its weakness, not its evil. Verse 19 names the result: "a better hope, through which we draw near to God." The better hope is not a future expectation but present access, the capacity to draw near that the old system explicitly withheld from the ordinary worshiper.

Key Terms

- *zoe akatalutos* -- indestructible, indissoluble life; legal and vital, a life that cannot be annulled.
- *athetesis* (v. 18) -- a setting aside, abrogation of the former commandment for weakness, not wickedness.
- *proserchomai* / better hope (v. 19) -- "draw near," sanctuary language; the hope is present access, not distant expectation.

Suggested Movements

1. The gap every priest's death created; who speaks for me right now.
2. The qualification that is categorically different; life, not lineage.
3. The resurrection as the ground of the priesthood, not an addendum.
4. The former commandment set aside; weak and useless for the one thing it could not do.
5. Land it: a better hope through which we draw near; access through a person who cannot die.

Preaching Note

Do not let "indestructible life" stay abstract. It is the pastoral hinge: every human covering ends by the nature of created life; His does not. Hold that distinction precisely, because the room will need it in Week 5.

— WEEK 4 —

■ THE OATH CHANGES EVERYTHING

Hebrews 7:20-22

The Argument

The Levitical priests "became priests without an oath." Aaron's sons were installed by prescriptive legislation, real but revisable. Christ was installed by the oath of Psalm 110:4, sworn by God concerning Himself and declared irrevocable. In the ancient world an oath was the strongest possible speech-act, binding the speaker's own person to the word. The absence of an oath in the Levitical appointment means that system was always, in principle, open to revision. The presence of an oath in Christ's means His is not.

Verse 22: "Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant." The word is *engyos*, appearing only here in the New Testament, a legal-commercial term for a surety who personally pledges to fulfill an obligation. Distinguish it from mediator (*mesites*): a mediator stands between the parties; a guarantor stands liable. Jesus does not merely broker the new covenant; He backs it with His own person, and He cannot fail because He lives forever.

Key Terms

- The oath (Psalm 110:4) -- the Levites had none; the oath makes Christ's office unalterable.
- *engyos* -- guarantor, surety; one who pledges himself for the obligation. Only New Testament use, here.
- *engyos* vs *mesites* -- guarantor (personally liable) versus mediator (stands between); Jesus is both, but verse 22 stresses the guarantee.

Suggested Movements

1. Appointment versus oath; the difference between revisable and unalterable.
2. What an oath was in the ancient world; God binding His own person.
3. The guarantor (surety); a person on the line, not a protocol.
4. Mediator and guarantor; He does not only broker, He backs it.
5. Land it: the new covenant cannot fail because the One who guarantees it cannot die.

Preaching Note

The legal vocabulary is the load-bearing material this week. Put *engyos* into plain speech, someone who co-signs and pays if you cannot, without losing its weight. The comfort is in the person of the guarantor, not in a lowered standard.

— WEEK 5 —

■ NO SUCCESSOR NEEDED

Hebrews 7:23-28

The Argument

Verse 23: the former priests "existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing." Verse 24: Jesus "holds His priesthood permanently," *aparabatos*, inviolable, non-transferable, not passing to a successor. Read the number problem theologically, not administratively: many priests existed because each one died, and each death said the work was not finished. The permanence of Christ's priesthood is the counter-statement: the work is complete, the access is settled.

Verse 25: "He always lives to make intercession for them," *eis to panteles*, to the uttermost, total in scope and permanent in duration. Note the present tense; the intercession is ongoing, not a past act that ended. Verse 27: *ephapax*, once for all, the single decisive sacrifice that needs no repetition. Verse 28 gathers the whole chapter: the Law appoints weak men; the word of the oath appoints a Son, made perfect forever.

Key Terms

- *aparabatos* (v. 24) -- permanent, non-transferable; the priesthood does not pass to a successor because its holder does not die.
- *eis to panteles* (v. 25) -- forever, to the uttermost; total in scope and permanent in duration.
- *ephapax* (v. 27) -- once for all; the decisive contrast with Levitical repetition.

Suggested Movements

1. The many priests and the gap each death created; the exposure of succession.
2. The one priest who holds the office permanently; ontological, not institutional.
3. He always lives to make intercession; the present-tense ministry happening now.
4. Once for all; the sacrifice that requires no repetition.
5. Close the chapter on verse 28: a Son, made perfect forever; the office no successor will ever fill.

Preaching Note

This is the destination of the series. Verse 25 must have done its work in you before you ask it to do its work in the room; you cannot carry a congregation past where you have gone. Preach it as arrival, and let "always" land.

This Preaching Guide is part of the This is not Levi series packet. Preach from what you carry, not from the page.

FOR GROUP LEADERS ONLY

Teacher Guide

This is not Levi

This guide is for you, the leader. It is not meant to be read to your group or distributed. It is your preparation document.

You are clergy. That shapes what this guide assumes and what it asks of you. Part of what these guides are doing is formation. They show you what preparation requires before anyone stands to teach a text like this one. The exegetical work in Section 1 is not optional background and it is not a summary you can lead from cold. It is the standard. Work the text, pray through the theology, internalize the room, and then lead from what you carry rather than from the page.

SECTION 1: EXEGETICAL PREPARATION

Before you facilitate a discussion on Hebrews 7, you prepare on Hebrews 7. The two are not the same. The discussion can be led from a single careful reading. The preparation cannot. What follows is the exegetical work the text asks of the one who teaches it. You will not deliver it line by line. You carry it in, because what you carry in determines what you can receive when the room opens.

This is also formation. The discipline modeled here is the discipline you carry into every text you will ever stand to teach. Work it. Do not skim it.

The Two Anchor Texts

Hebrews 7 does not argue in a vacuum. It stands on two Old Testament texts, and the chapter is unintelligible without them. Read both before you read the chapter.

Genesis 14:17-20. Melchizedek appears without introduction. King of Salem (proto-Jerusalem), priest of God Most High (El Elyon). He brings out bread and wine, blesses Abraham after the battle of the kings, and receives a tithe from him. Genesis gives no genealogy, no birth, no death, no account of how the priesthood began or ended. He appears, blesses, and is gone. Hold the tithe in your mind: Abraham, the father of the whole nation and therefore of the entire Levitical line, submitted to this man and paid him a tenth.

Psalms 110:4. "The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.'" This is the interpretive key to the chapter. Psalm 110 is a royal psalm, read as messianic across Second Temple Judaism and the New Testament. Verse 1 is the most-quoted Old Testament verse in the New Testament. Verse 4 adds the line Hebrews builds on: the one seated at God's right hand is also a priest, and a priest of a different order than Aaron. Three features of this oath drive the chapter -- the oath form ("the LORD has sworn"), its irrevocability ("will not change His mind"), and its duration ("forever"). The author treats Psalm 110:4 as an undischarged word of Scripture: a promise standing open, waiting for the priest who would fulfill it.

Preparation note: if you cannot explain why these two texts make the argument of Hebrews 7 possible, you are not yet ready to teach the chapter. Start here every time.

Movement 1 | Hebrews 7:1-3 | "Before Abraham Was"

Verse 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."

The three terms -- *apator*, *ameter*, *agenealogetos* (without father, without mother, without genealogy) -- are not biological claims. They do not say Melchizedek was born of no one. They observe that the Genesis text records no father, no mother, no lineage. In a system where priestly legitimacy depended entirely on traceable Levitical descent (Numbers 3; Ezra 2:61-63 disqualified priests who could not produce their genealogy), the silence is itself the statement. The absence is constructive. Scripture withholds the record on purpose, and the withholding creates a textual figure whose priesthood appears unbounded.

Watch the direction of the typology in the phrase "made like the Son of God." Melchizedek is the type; Christ is the antitype. The shadow is shaped to resemble the substance, not the reverse. Melchizedek resembles Christ. Christ does not resemble Melchizedek. If you reverse that arrow in the room, the whole chapter inverts.

Note also the union of two offices: king of Salem and priest of God Most High. Israel separated those offices strictly (Uzziah was struck for crossing the line, 2 Chronicles 26:16-21). Melchizedek held both. So does Christ -- High Priest and King of kings, seated at the right hand of the Father. The Levitical order had no room for that combination. It required a different order.

What this requires of you: the ability to argue from silence without overreaching. The point is not speculation about Melchizedek's nature. The point is what the text accomplishes by what it omits.

The Bridge You Do Not Stop On (7:4-10)

The discussion movements move from verses 1-3 to verse 11, but you should understand what sits between them. Verses 4-10 develop the tithe into an argument about precedence: the lesser is blessed by the greater, and the lesser pays tithes to the greater. The author then makes a remarkable move. Levi, still in the loins of Abraham, paid tithes to Melchizedek through his ancestor (vv. 9-10). The point is hierarchy. The Melchizedek priesthood is shown to be greater than the Levitical, because Levi himself, in his father, acknowledged it. You will likely not teach this passage directly, but if a sharp question comes about why Melchizedek matters at all, this is your answer.

Movement 2 | Hebrews 7:11-14 | "The System Could Not Finish the Job"

Verse 11 turns on one word: *teleiosis* -- perfection, completeness, the full accomplishment of the goal. The argument is deductive. If perfection had come through the Levitical priesthood, there would be no need for God to promise a priest of another order. The existence of the Psalm 110:4 promise is therefore proof that the system never reached *teleiosis*. The later word exposes the limit of the earlier one.

Be precise here, because the room will hear an attack on the law if you are not. *Teleiosis* in Hebrews is not abstract moral perfection. It is the full accomplishment of what the priestly system existed to do: bring the worshiper into the permanent, unmediated presence of God. The Levitical system could not do that. Its very design -- daily sacrifices, the annual Day of Atonement, the succession of priests -- was a standing confession that the work was never finished. A finished work does not need to be repeated.

Verse 12: "when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also." Priesthood and law were structurally bound. Change one and you change the other. This is a structural claim, not an antinomian one. Then the tribal problem (vv. 13-14): Jesus came from Judah, and Moses said nothing about priests from Judah. By every Levitical standard, He was disqualified before He began. The author does not treat this defensively. He treats it as evidence, proof that something categorically new has arrived, something the old categories cannot hold.

What this requires of you: the discipline to honor the law while showing its ceiling. The system did not fail. It finished its assignment and pointed past itself. If your teaching leaves the room thinking the old covenant was a mistake, you have misread the argument.

Movement 3 | Hebrews 7:15-19 | "He Lives"

Verse 16: "...who has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life." The word is *akatalutos* -- indissoluble, incapable of being annulled, undone, or destroyed. The Levitical priest qualified *kata sarka*, according to the flesh, by physical descent, and served until death. The limitation was biological, and therefore permanent: every priest died, and every death required a successor. Christ holds His office on the basis of a life that death could not dissolve. The resurrection is not a footnote to the priestly argument. It is the ground of it. Because He lives, the office cannot pass to another.

Akatalutos carries a legal sense as well as a vital one: a life that cannot be undone by any external force, legal claim, or natural process. His priesthood is not merely long. It is indestructible in kind.

Verse 18: *athetesis* -- a setting aside, annulment, abrogation of the former commandment "because of its weakness and uselessness." The same root appears in 9:26 for the cancellation of sin. The author is careful and so must you be: he does not call the law evil. He calls it weak and useless for one specific purpose, achieving *teleiosis*. It could not bring forward what it pointed to. Verse 19 names the result: "a better hope, through which we draw near to God." *Kreitton* (better) appears thirteen times in Hebrews; this is the seventh. The "better hope" is not a future expectation. It is present access, the capacity to draw near that the outer court, the inner court, and the single annual entry into the Most Holy Place all explicitly withheld from the ordinary worshiper.

What this requires of you: do not let "indestructible life" stay abstract. It is the pastoral hinge of the chapter. Every human covering ends, not by failure but by the nature of created life. His does not. Hold that distinction precisely, because the room will need it in Movement 5.

Movement 4 | Hebrews 7:20-22 | "The Oath Changes Everything"

Verses 20-21 contrast two kinds of appointment. The Levitical priests "became priests without an oath." Aaron's sons were installed by prescriptive legislation (Exodus 28-29; Numbers 18), real but revisable. Christ was installed by the oath of Psalm 110:4, sworn by God concerning Himself and declared irrevocable. In the ancient world an oath was the strongest possible speech-act: it bound the speaker's own person and integrity to the word. When God swears by Himself (Genesis 22:16, which Hebrews 6:13-18 has already invoked), the promise is as certain as God is faithful. The absence of an oath in the Levitical appointment means that system was always, in principle, open to revision. The presence of an oath in Christ's means His is not.

Verse 22: "Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant." The word is *enguos*, and it appears only here in the New Testament. It is a legal-commercial term, a surety or guarantor who personally pledges to fulfill an obligation if the primary party cannot. Note the distinction from mediator (*mesites*), which Hebrews uses elsewhere (8:6; 9:15; 12:24). A mediator stands between the parties. A guarantor stands liable. Jesus does not merely broker the new covenant; He backs it with His own person. If it fails, it fails in Him. And it cannot fail, because He lives forever.

Watch how the arguments interlock: the oath establishes the priest, the priest is the guarantee of the covenant, and the indestructible life of the priest is what makes the guarantee binding. Pull one out and the other two collapse. Teach them as a single mechanism.

What this requires of you: comfort with the legal vocabulary of the passage. Enguos and aparabatos are not decoration. They are the load-bearing terms. Know them well enough to put them in plain speech without losing their weight.

Movement 5 | Hebrews 7:23-28 | "No Successor Needed"

Verse 23: the former priests "existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing." Verse 24: "Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently." The word is *aparabatos* -- inviolable, non-transferable, not passing to another. The legal sense is closer to "not subject to succession" than simply "permanent." This priesthood does not flow down a chain. It does not pass to a successor at the death of its holder, because its holder does not die.

Read the number problem theologically, not administratively. Many Levitical priests existed because each one died, and each death was a statement: the work was not finished, the access was not yet secured. The permanence of Christ's priesthood is the counter-statement: the work is complete, the access is settled.

Verse 25: "He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." Note the present tense. He always lives, He is always interceding. The intercession is not a past act that secured a result and ended. It is the ongoing ministry of the living High Priest, the perpetual presentation before the Father of a finished sacrifice. *Eis to panteles* (save forever, to the uttermost) carries both senses at once: total in scope and permanent in duration.

Verse 27: *ephapax* -- once for all, in a single decisive act. The adverb appears three times in Hebrews (7:27; 9:12; 10:10). It is the sharpest contrast in the chapter. Levitical repetition was not a sign of power but a

confession of insufficiency: every repeated sacrifice announced that the last one had not been enough. The *ephapax* of Christ declares the opposite. This was enough. Nothing follows it.

Verse 28 closes the chapter, and you should let it close your preparation: "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." Weakness against the oath. The Law against the Son. Mortality against perfection forever. Every thread of the chapter is gathered into that one sentence.

What this requires of you: that verse 25 has done its work in you before you ask it to do its work in the room. You cannot carry the congregation past where you yourself have gone. Sit with "always lives" until it stops being a doctrine and becomes an address.

The exegetical work above tells you what the text says. The primer that follows tells you what it means for the people in front of you. Move from one to the other in your preparation. Do not skip either.

SECTION 2: THEOLOGICAL PRIMER

You are clergy, and this primer is not new ground for you. Its purpose is to set the four categories of priesthood in the exact order Hebrews 7 needs them, so that you hold them as the working frame for the room you lead. You will not teach this taxonomy to your group. You will use it to know where a question is coming from and where to take it.

Four Categories of Priesthood

When your group members come in, they are already carrying assumptions about priesthood. Those assumptions come from at least three sources. Hebrews 7 addresses all of them. Here is how to hold them in your mind.

The Levitical Priesthood

This is the system Hebrews 7 is retiring. The tribe of Levi was set apart to mediate Israel's access to God. Priests served in the temple, offered sacrifices, and stood between the people and the holiness of God. When a priest died, his son -- if qualified -- took his place. The system required constant succession because every priest eventually died. Death was not a malfunction. It was a built-in limit.

Hebrews 7 is not dishonoring this system. It is declaring that the system always pointed to someone else and has now been superseded by Him. The priesthood has not been updated. It has been fulfilled and replaced.

The Presbyteral Office (Elder / Pastor)

In many Christian traditions, the English word "priest" comes from the Greek word *presbuteros*, which means elder. The pastoral office -- whoever teaches, prays, and covers a congregation -- functions in a priestly role. But

unlike the Levitical system, the office outlives the officeholder. There is always another pastor. There is always another elder. When one leader leaves, the office continues.

This is the priestly experience most of your group members have actually had: the pastor who prayed for them, the elder who showed up in the hospital, the leader who covered them in a hard season. This is good and right. But this is not what Hebrews 7 is describing. This is also the office you yourself hold, which is precisely why you must not confuse it with the fourth category as you teach.

The Priesthood of All Believers

First Peter 2:9 says that the whole body of believers is "a royal priesthood." Every follower of Jesus has direct access to God. There is no human intermediary required. Spiritual sacrifices -- prayer, worship, service -- are offered by the whole body. This is real and important. But it participates in what Christ opened; it does not replicate His unique function.

Christ's Priesthood (The Fourth Category)

This is what Hebrews 7 is describing, and it does not fit into any of the three categories above.

It is not a succession. There is no one who follows Jesus in the role.

It is not held by an office that passes from person to person. No institution carries it.

It is not distributed across the body of believers. Every believer has access, but no believer functions as High Priest.

One person holds it. He holds it permanently, by divine oath (not by legal qualification). He offered a once-for-all sacrifice, and He entered the presence of God on that basis. He always lives to make intercession. Not seasonally. Not when circumstances align. Always.

The reason this matters practically: your group members may be conflating these categories in ways they do not realize. Someone who lost a pastor they trusted may be grieving the gap in category two while needing category four. Someone who carries guilt about their own access to God may not have separated category three from category four. Someone formed in a tradition with strong Levitical-type structures may not have processed that category one has been fulfilled and retired.

You do not need to teach this taxonomy to your group. It is for you. When you know which category a question or a grief is coming from, you know where to take it. All roads go to verse 25.

SECTION 3: SESSION AT A GLANCE

60-Minute Session

Block	Content	Time
Opening	Questions 1-2	10 minutes

Into the Text	Questions 3-7	35 minutes
Landing	Questions 8-9	10 minutes
Application + Closing	Read together, pray	5 minutes

90-Minute Session

Block	Content	Time
Opening	Questions 1-2	10 minutes
Into the Text	Questions 3-7	45 minutes
Landing	Questions 8-9	20 minutes
Application + Closing	Read together, pray	15 minutes

Note: You do not need to use every question. The demographic guidance in Section 5 identifies the anchor questions for your specific group. Know which questions carry the most weight for your room, and protect the time for those.

SECTION 4: FACILITATION NOTES FOR EACH QUESTION

For each question: what it is designed to surface, where to go if the room is quiet, and where to go if the room goes deep.

Question 1 -- "When you hear the word 'priest,' what is the first image that comes to mind?"

What this question is designed to surface: Assumptions, prior experiences, and unprocessed baggage about what a priest is and does. This is the clearing question. It surfaces the lens your group will use to read Hebrews 7 -- and Hebrews 7 is about to reframe every answer they give.

If the group is quiet: Say, "Think about the first time you heard the word 'priest' in a religious context. What was the setting? What was the role?" Keep it concrete and biographical. Quiet in this question usually means people have not been asked before -- they have an answer, they just need permission to give it.

If the group goes deep: Note the images that surface. You do not need to correct them. Simply note: "Hebrews 7 is about to put all of those images in conversation with one another. Keep them in mind as we read."

Text to re-read if needed: Not applicable at this stage.

Question 2 -- "Has there ever been a person in your life who covered you spiritually?"

What this question is designed to surface: The personal experience of being covered -- and the specific wound of experiencing the gap when that covering ends. This is where pastoral grief surfaces. Do not rush it.

If the group is quiet: Say, "This could be a parent, a pastor, a mentor, an older believer -- someone who prayed for you when you could not pray for yourself. Someone whose presence made something feel more manageable." If the room is still quiet, share a brief example yourself.

If the group goes deep on grief or loss: Let it land. Resist the impulse to fix it or redirect too quickly. When the room is ready, make this transition: "That experience of the gap is exactly what Hebrews 7 is addressing. And the answer it gives is not another person in the role. It is the one person whose covering never ends."

Text to re-read if needed: Come back to this after Question 7 if the grief surfaces again there.

Question 3 -- "What is the text communicating in those silences about Melchizedek?"

What this question is designed to surface: The typological argument at the foundation of Hebrews 7. Melchizedek's missing genealogy, birth record, and death notice are the point -- not an oversight. The author is establishing a category of priesthood that exists outside the genealogical system.

If the group is quiet: Re-read 7:1-3 aloud. Then ask: "What is NOT in these verses that you would normally expect to find about a priest?" Walk them through the missing elements: no father listed, no mother listed, no lineage traced, no death recorded. Ask: "What does the author accomplish by leaving those out?"

If the group goes deep: Draw out this principle: the silence is constructive. The absence of genealogy is not a gap in the record -- it is a theological statement. Melchizedek is being presented as a figure who exists in a different category entirely. The type points to the antitype, who also has no beginning of days (in His divine nature) and no end to His priestly ministry.

Text to re-read if needed: Hebrews 7:1-3.

Question 4 -- "Walk through the logic of verse 11 together."

What this question is designed to surface: The intellectual center of the chapter. The argument is deductive: if system A were sufficient, there would be no promise for system B. The promise is evidence that A had a ceiling. This is not an attack on the Levitical system -- it is a disclosure of its designed limit.

If the group is quiet: Restate the logic slowly. "The Levitical priesthood existed. It was given by God. It functioned for centuries. And then God made a promise through the Psalms for a priest of a completely different order. What does that sequence tell you?" Give them time to work through it. Do not answer for them.

If the group goes deep: Draw out this principle: a promise for something better is an implicit admission that what currently exists has a limit. The promise is the indictment -- not a harsh judgment, but a disclosure. The system was always a forerunner. God always intended to go further.

The parallel-life question ("something that was good, but whose limitations became clear when something better appeared") can carry significant personal weight. Let people go there. It opens Hebrews 7 experientially, not just intellectually.

Text to re-read if needed: Hebrews 7:11.

Question 5 -- "What qualifies the people you give spiritual authority over your life?"

What this question is designed to surface: The pastoral center of Movement 3 and one of the most personally applied questions in the session. Many people give spiritual authority based on position, title, relational proximity, or charisma. Verse 16 introduces a qualification that is categorically different: the power of an indestructible life.

If the group is quiet: Ask: "Who are you giving spiritual access to your life right now -- and what qualifies them? How did you decide to trust them?" This makes the question concrete before connecting it to the text.

If the group goes deep on "indestructible life": Draw out this principle. Every human covering eventually ends -- not because the person failed, but because creaturely life has a limit. A pastor retires. A mentor ages. A parent dies. That is not a malfunction; it is the nature of created life. What Jesus holds is categorically different. The life behind His priesthood cannot be dissolved.

Text to re-read if needed: Hebrews 7:15-16.

Question 6 -- "What does it mean to you that if the covenant fails, it fails in Jesus before it fails in you?"

What this question is designed to surface: The covenantal and legal center of Movement 4. A guarantor (surety) puts himself personally on the line for an obligation. If it fails, it fails in him. Jesus is the guarantor of the new covenant. The guarantee is personal, not institutional.

If the group is quiet: Explain surety in plain terms: "A surety is someone who co-signs for your obligation. If you cannot pay, they pay in your place. They do not just encourage you to pay -- they are personally on the hook if you cannot." Then ask: "What does it do to your understanding of your relationship with God when you know that Jesus is the one co-signing?"

If the group goes deep: Draw out this distinction. The guarantee is not about lowering the standard. It is about the identity of the one who backs it. The covenant between God and you is backed by a guarantor whose life is indestructible and whose oath is sworn by God Himself. The likelihood of it failing is identical to the likelihood of that life being extinguished.

Text to re-read if needed: Hebrews 7:20-22.

Question 7 -- "What situation in your life right now needs you to hear 'always' rather than 'sometimes'?"

What this question is designed to surface: The pastoral payoff of the whole chapter. This is the question that makes verse 25 personal rather than doctrinal. Do not rush it.

Before asking the question: Read verse 25 aloud slowly. Pause after "always lives." Let the room sit with it for a moment before asking the question.

If the group is quiet: Give them silence. Do not fill it. The quiet is often the verse doing its work. If a full minute passes with no response, say: "Take your time. This question is worth the space it needs." The question is asking people to name something real, and that takes courage. Wait for it.

If the group goes deep into specific situations: Let them go. This is the verse doing what it is designed to do. Resist the impulse to wrap it up or pivot to the next question. When people name a real situation and hold it against "always," the text is working. This is the moment.

Text to re-read if needed: Hebrews 7:25.

Question 8 -- "Finish the sentence: Because the priest is not from Levi, I now know that ____."

What this question is designed to surface: Synthesis. This question collects the fruit of the whole session in one statement from each person in the room. Every person should answer. It surfaces what actually landed.

If someone is stuck: Ask, "What is the one thing you did not know -- or did not fully believe -- before you read this chapter?" This gives them a different angle into the same synthesis.

If the group goes deep: Write down the answers if you can. They are the evidence of what the text accomplished in the room. They are also material for prayer -- the answers to this question are what you bring before God on behalf of your group.

Text to re-read if needed: Not applicable. This question draws from the whole chapter.

Question 9 -- "If you actually believed He is doing that right now, what would you bring to Him?"

What this question is designed to surface: The bridge to prayer. This question moves the session from discussion to personal posture. The answer to this question is what your closing prayer receives and names before God.

How to handle the answers: Do not analyze them. Do not probe or invite elaboration. Receive them. Let each person name what they would bring. Then move directly from the last answer into the closing prayer. Carry what you heard into the prayer. Name it before God on behalf of the room.

Text to re-read if needed: Hebrews 7:25-26.

■ SECTION 5: DEMOGRAPHIC GUIDANCE BY GROUP

Read the notes for your specific group carefully. These are not general observations. They are the pastoral intelligence for your room.

Baby Boomers

Primary entry point: Movement 5 -- No Successor Needed.

This generation has built institutions. They have watched institutions change hands, decay, and in some cases fail. They understand the gap between one era and the next from the inside. The promise that He always lives to make intercession lands with particular weight for people who have prayed through pastoral transitions, denominational fractures, and the slow drift of organizations they gave decades to build.

The covenant-as-oath framing of Movement 4 also resonates here. Long marriages, long commitments, and the understanding of what it costs to hold an oath through changing seasons -- all of that makes the theological claim of verse 21 personal and concrete.

Anchor questions for this group: 2, 4, 6, 7, 8.

Facilitation note: Give Movement 5 the most time in this room. Do not rush Question 7. This generation may take longer to get to what they actually need to say -- and what they say when they get there is worth waiting for. The grief about institutional gaps and pastoral transitions is real, and verse 25 is the most direct word they will receive about it.

Generation Changers

Primary entry point: Movement 2 (the forerunner) and Movement 5 (no successor needed).

This hybrid group -- the generation under the Baby Boomers -- often finds itself in a forerunner position. Building things they may not see come to fullness. Experiencing pastoral transitions while also being asked to lead through them. Carrying institutional loyalty alongside legitimate skepticism about institutions.

Many people in this group have lived through enough successions and transitions to feel the gap personally -- not as a concept, but as a lived experience of being between something that was and something that has not yet arrived. The "better hope" of Movement 3 also speaks to a generation that has sometimes experienced their entire season as a long transition rather than an arrival.

Anchor questions: 4, 5, 7, 8.

Facilitation note: Watch for people in this room who carry quiet grief about things that had to end. Movement 2's language of the forerunner stepping aside to make room for what it was pointing to is pastoral for them. The Levitical system did not fail -- it fulfilled its purpose and stepped down. That framing speaks to a generation that has had to release more than it received.

Men's Discipleship Group

Primary entry point: Movement 3 (qualification by life, not lineage) and Movement 4 (the oath).

Men in this group are culturally positioned as the ones who cover others -- families, marriages, teams, employees. They are often more practiced at providing spiritual covering than at receiving it. Hebrews 7 speaks directly to them: you also have a High Priest who covers you. You do not have to be your own priest. You are not the last line of defense.

The institutional and contractual language of Movement 4 is familiar professional territory. Appointment versus oath. Position versus personal guarantee. Meeting a standard versus being secured by the character of the one who swore. These distinctions open the theological argument through a grid men in this room already use.

Question 5 -- what qualifies the people you give spiritual authority over your life? -- will hit differently in this room. Men who give authority too broadly (and then feel exposed when it fails) and men who give authority to no one (and carry everything alone) both need this question.

Anchor questions: 3, 5, 6, 7.

Facilitation note: Question 2 may be the hardest question in this room. Men who have been covered rarely name it. Men who have never had it may not know what to compare. Give the question time. Do not rescue the silence too quickly. The difficulty of the question is often the most honest thing happening in the room.

Mom's Discipleship Group

Primary entry point: Movement 3 and Movement 5.

The covering that never goes off shift is the pastoral center of this room. Many mothers in this group carry their children before God in ways and with a consistency that they do not carry themselves. The intercessory function of verse 25 -- "He always lives to make intercession" -- speaks directly to the posture they already occupy. But this session is an opportunity to turn that language back toward the mothers themselves.

When you reach Question 7, do not let the answers stay focused only on their children. Gently redirect: "What about you? Not what you are interceding for. What do you need intercession for?" The verse says "for them" -- and they are in the them.

Movement 2 also carries pastoral weight for this group. Many mothers are in a forerunner season: doing labor and sacrifice whose fruit another generation will receive. The text's acknowledgment that forerunner work is real, meaningful, and completed does not diminish it.

Anchor questions: 2, 7, 9.

Facilitation note: Let Question 9 become the bridge to prayer. What mothers would bring to an intercessor who is always available, never distracted, and already interceding on their behalf -- that is the pastoral fruit of the whole session. Receive those answers carefully and carry them into the closing prayer by name.

Singles Discipleship Group

Primary entry point: Movement 3 (access through an indestructible life, not through relational status) and Movement 1 (encounter outside of normal frameworks).

Direct access to God -- not mediated by a relational status, not contingent on a particular season or life stage -- is specifically liberating for people who have sometimes felt that certain spiritual experiences are designed for a different chapter of life. The text does not require you to be in a particular relational or institutional position to have full access to the priest who is permanent.

Movement 1 is significant for this group: Melchizedek's encounter with Abraham happens entirely outside normal relational and institutional frameworks. No genealogy. No standing. No prerequisite. The encounter does not require a certain position to be legitimate. That framing is pastoral in a room where people sometimes feel their access is pending some future threshold.

Question 2 is acute in this room. "Who has covered you spiritually, and what happened when that covering became unavailable?" is a question that can carry layered weight for people whose spiritual covering has been inconsistent, absent, or tied to relational seasons that ended. Do not move past it quickly.

Anchor questions: 1, 2, 3, 7.

Facilitation note: Let Question 9 close the session personally. The answer to "what would you bring to Him right now?" in this room is often something that has not been named anywhere else. It is worth the time.

Women's Discipleship Group

Primary entry point: Movement 5 (the representation that never ends) and Movement 3 (the access that requires no status).

The question "who speaks for me right now?" carries particular pastoral weight in this room. Women in this group who have experienced seasons of being unheard, overlooked, or inadequately represented in ministry contexts need to hear that the intercession of verse 25 is not passive, conditional, or occasional. It is perpetual, active, and personal. He is speaking on their behalf right now -- not because of their position, not because they earned the hearing, but because He always lives to do exactly that.

Question 2 and Question 7 are the pastoral center of this session for this group. The gap between the covering that was available and the one they needed is a real experience for many women in the room. And verse 25 is the direct address to that gap.

Anchor questions: 2, 7, 8, 9.

Facilitation note: When you reach Question 8 ("finish the sentence"), give the room time to answer. Do not prompt too quickly. The answers that come out of a Women's Discipleship Group tend to be among the richest in the building -- but they require space to arrive. Wait for them. Write them down.

The closing reading of 7:25-26 should be read slowly in this room, with intention. The prayer that follows should anchor on the word "always" and receive what the room named in Questions 7-9.

■ SECTION 6: CLOSING PRAYER ANCHOR

Use this as a guide -- not a script. Pray from what you heard in the room, especially from Questions 7 and 9.

Template:

"Lord, we draw near to You through the one You have appointed -- the one You swore in, the one who holds His office forever and has not stepped down from it. We bring to You [receive the answers from Question 9 and name them before God]. We receive the intercession that is already happening on our behalf. Because He always lives, we are never unrepresented before You. Whatever we could not bring before, we bring now. Whatever we have been carrying alone, we set it before the one who always lives to intercede. Amen."

This guide is written for the leader's hands; give the men the Student Guide.

The MarketPlace Movement | This is not Levi | Hebrews 7:1-28 | NASB95

MPM SMALL GROUPS

Student Guide

This is not Levi

■ BEFORE YOUR GROUP MEETS

Before your group meets, read Hebrews 7:1-28 in one sitting. Use NASB95 if you have it. Read it with a pen in hand -- mark anything that surprises you, confuses you, or lands with weight. The five movements below will help you see how the argument moves through the chapter. Whether you have heard one message from this series or all five, come with the text in hand.

This guide is designed to work from the chapter itself. The sermons add depth, but the text is sufficient. You do not need to have heard every Sunday message to engage this discussion fully. You need to have read the chapter.

■ SERIES CONTEXT

Series Title: This is not Levi

Tagline: A Priest Forever (Psalm 110:4)

Primary Text: Hebrews 7:1-28 (NASB95)

We have been moving through Hebrews as a congregation. "Are We Drifting?" (Hebrews 6:1-8) named the danger of slow spiritual movement away from God. "Better Things" (Hebrews 6:9-20) was the turn -- convinced of better things, pressing forward, ending at the threshold with the forerunner already inside the veil. Hebrews 7 opens that door and tells us who is standing on the other side.

■ THE FIVE MOVEMENTS OF HEBREWS 7

These are not sermon summaries. They are a reading guide to the chapter itself. Use them to orient yourself as you read, and refer to them during discussion.

Movement 1 | Hebrews 7:1-3 | "Before Abraham Was"

The author deliberately withholds Melchizedek's genealogy, birth record, and death notice. He receives a tithe from Abraham -- the founding father of the entire Jewish people -- and blesses him. The silence about where Melchizedek comes from and where he goes is not an oversight. It is the argument. A figure who exists outside every category normally used to measure priests.

Watch for: What the author does NOT say. Every other priest in this world came from somewhere and eventually died. The text refuses to give those details about Melchizedek -- and that refusal makes a claim.

Text question: What is the author communicating by what he does not say about Melchizedek?

Movement 2 | Hebrews 7:11-14 | "The System Could Not Finish the Job"

Verse 11 makes a logical argument: if the Levitical system had been sufficient, why did God promise a priest of a completely different order? The promise is the indictment -- not a criticism of the system, but a disclosure of its limits. The system was not a failure. It was a forerunner. But Jesus is from Judah, not Levi. Moses said nothing about priests from Judah. The category is not being reformed. It is being replaced.

Watch for: The logic of verse 11. A promise for something different implies that what exists is not enough. The existence of Psalm 110:4 tells you something about what the Levitical system could not do.

Text question: What does the existence of the Psalm 110 promise say about the system it came from?

Movement 3 | Hebrews 7:15-19 | "He Lives"

Verse 16 gives the qualification that changes everything: "the power of an indestructible life" (zoe akatalutos in the Greek -- a life that cannot be undone, dissolved, or ended). Every Levitical priest eventually died, which created a gap in coverage. Jesus holds His office on the basis of a life that cannot be broken. The result, in verse 19, is a better hope through which we draw near to God. Not a better system. A better life behind the office.

Watch for: What qualifies Jesus to hold the priesthood permanently. It is not lineage. It is not legal standing. It is the specific character of His life.

Text question: What does it mean for a priesthood to be based on indestructible life rather than on lineage?

Movement 4 | Hebrews 7:20-22 | "The Oath Changes Everything"

Count how many times "oath" appears in this section. The Levitical priests were installed by legal requirement -- they qualified by birth and met the standard. Jesus was installed by the sworn oath of God Himself. God swearing by Himself makes it unalterable -- there is nothing higher to appeal to, nothing that can supersede it. Verse 22: this makes Jesus the "guarantor" (surety) of a better covenant. A guarantor takes personal responsibility. If the agreement fails, it fails in him first.

Watch for: The difference between a position secured by requirement and a position secured by oath. One depends on meeting a standard. The other depends on the character of the one who swore.

Text question: What is the practical difference between a position established by requirement and a position secured by oath?

Movement 5 | Hebrews 7:23-28 | "No Successor Needed"

Verse 23: the former priests existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing. Verse 24: He holds His priesthood permanently. Verse 25: He always lives to make intercession for them. The

word "always" is the hinge. No gap. No successor. The priest who stepped in has not stepped down. Verse 26 describes Him as holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens -- and this is the priest you have right now.

Watch for: The contrast between verse 23 and verse 24. Many priests, because death keeps ending the office. One priest, permanent, because death could not hold Him.

Text question: What does the word "always" in verse 25 mean for you specifically right now?

■ A WORD FOR YOUR GROUP

Some of you are in more than one group, and some of the groups gather on different rhythms. This chapter meets every one of us, but it tends to meet each group through a particular door first. Find your group below. If you are in more than one, read both -- you will likely find that the chapter has more than one word for you. This is not a limit on what God can say to you. It is a starting place. Come having done the small piece of preparation named for your group, and come ready for the text to go further than that.

If you are in the Baby Boomers group:

You have built things and watched them change hands. You have likely prayed through pastoral transitions and the slow drift of organizations you gave decades to. This chapter has a word for exactly that. The priest who always lives has not stepped down and will not hand His office to a successor. Movement 5 is your doorway. Before you come, bring to mind one institution, ministry, or relationship whose handoff you have grieved. Hold the gap you have watched against the word "always" in verse 25, and bring it to Question 7.

If you are in the Generation Changers group:

You may know the forerunner position from the inside -- building what you may not see finished, leading through transitions you did not choose, carrying loyalty and honest questions at the same time. Movements 2 and 5 are your doorways. The Levitical system did not fail; it finished its assignment and stepped down. Before you come, think about something good you have had to release before you felt ready. Bring it to Questions 4 and 7.

If you are in the Men's Discipleship Group:

You are probably more practiced at covering others than at being covered -- family, marriage, team, the people who depend on you. Hebrews 7 says you also have a High Priest, and you are not the last line of defense. Movements 3 and 4 are your doorways. Before you come, sit with Question 5: who have you given spiritual authority over your life, and what qualifies them? Come ready to answer honestly whether you have let anyone cover you at all.

If you are in the Mom's Discipleship Group:

You carry others before God with a consistency you rarely turn toward yourself. The intercession of verse 25 -- "He always lives to make intercession" -- is the posture you already occupy for your children. This chapter invites you to receive it for yourself. Movements 3 and 5 are your doorways. Before you come, prepare to answer Question 7 about you, not about the people you carry. The verse says He intercedes "for them," and you are in the them.

If you are in the Singles Discipleship Group:

Your access to God is not pending a future season, a relationship, or a change in status. Melchizedek met Abraham entirely outside the normal frameworks -- no lineage, no standing, no prerequisite. Movements 1 and 3 are your doorways. Before you come, notice any place where you have quietly believed that full access to God is waiting on something to change in your life first. Bring that to Questions 2 and 7.

If you are in the Women's Discipleship Group:

"Who speaks for me right now?" Hebrews 7 answers it. The intercession of verse 25 is not passive, occasional, or earned. He is speaking on your behalf at this moment. Movements 5 and 3 are your doorways. Before you come, bring to mind a place where you have felt unheard, overlooked, or unrepresented. Hold it next to "He always lives to make intercession," and bring it to Questions 7 and 9.

■ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Your group leader will guide you through these questions. Come prepared to engage the text you read before the session.

Opening (10 minutes)

1. When you hear the word "priest," what is the first image that comes to mind? What shaped that image -- tradition, experience, a specific person?
2. Has there ever been a person in your life who covered you spiritually -- someone who stood between you and something you could not face alone? What happened when that covering became unavailable?

Into the Text (30-40 minutes)

3. Read Hebrews 7:1-3 aloud as a group. The author deliberately does not give Melchizedek a genealogy, a birth record, or a death notice. What is the text communicating in those silences? What does it mean that Melchizedek exists outside every category normally used to measure priests?
4. The argument in verse 11 is precise: if the Levitical priesthood had been sufficient, why did God promise a priest of a completely different order? Walk through that logic together. What does the existence of that promise say about the system it came from? Can you think of a parallel in your own life -- something that was good, but whose limitations became clear when something better appeared?
5. Find the phrase "power of an indestructible life" in verse 16. What qualifies the people you give spiritual authority over your life? How does that compare to this qualification? What changes about who you trust when

the standard is the kind of life they hold rather than the position they occupy?

6. In verse 22, Jesus is called the "guarantor" of a better covenant. A guarantor takes personal responsibility for the obligation -- if it fails, it fails in him first. What does it mean to you that if the covenant between God and you ever fails, it fails in Jesus before it fails in you?

7. Read verse 25 slowly as a group: "He always lives to make intercession for them." The word "always" is doing the work in that sentence. Not when you deserve it. Not when you ask. Not when the circumstances warrant it. Always. What situation in your life right now needs you to hear "always" rather than "sometimes"?

Landing (15-20 minutes)

8. The series title is "This is not Levi." After reading through Hebrews 7 and discussing it together, finish this sentence: Because the priest is not from Levi, I now know that _____.

9. Hebrews 7:25 says He always lives to make intercession. If you actually believed He is doing that right now -- not in general, but specifically for you, in this moment -- what would you bring to Him?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

Take these with you this week. They are not assignments. They are invitations to let the text do what it is designed to do.

1. Read Hebrews 7:25 every morning this week -- not as a memory exercise, but as a report on what is currently happening while you read it. He is not going to begin interceding. He is already interceding.
2. Write down one place in your life where you have felt unrepresented, uncovered, or exposed before God. Hold it next to verse 25. What changes?
3. Pray once this week using the language of approach: "I am drawing near with confidence, because I have a High Priest who has not stepped down."

CLOSING -- READ TOGETHER

"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. For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens." -- Hebrews 7:25-26, NASB95

Close in prayer led by your group leader, anchored on the permanence of the intercession.

PERSONAL & MIDWEEK STUDY

Weekly Companion

This is not Levi

This companion carries the weekly walk for the This is not Levi series. Each week holds the Sunday teaching in brief, the Wednesday depth-dive, and your own work for the days in between: a journal prompt, deeper readings, and reflection questions. Use it at whatever pace your week allows. You do not have to finish every part. The text is doing the work. Give it room.

— WEEK 1 —

■ BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS

Hebrews 7:1-3 · June 28, 2026

Sunday Teaching

A figure appears in Genesis 14 without introduction, no genealogy, no birth record, no death notice, receives a tithe from Abraham, blesses him, and disappears. His obscurity is not an accident. Melchizedek is not strange because he is legendary; he is strange because the text treats him as if the categories we use to measure priests do not apply to him. The question that opens the message: what do you do with a priest who exists outside every system you built to manage access to God?

The chapter never allows Melchizedek to remain a curiosity. He is a type, and types exist to be filled.

Wednesday Depth-Dive

Genesis 14:17-20 in full. The name meanings: Melchizedek is king of righteousness, Salem is king of peace, and Hebrews 7:2 names both deliberately. The bread and wine he brings to Abraham, and why the father of the covenant people gives a tenth to a king-priest he did not summon. Psalm 110:4 in its Davidic context: David prophesying a coming king-priest of a completely different order. The typological logic: Melchizedek is a sign pointing forward, not the thing itself.

Your Work This Week

Journal Prompt

The categories we build to manage access to God can become the very things that keep us from recognizing when He shows up in a form we did not expect. Write about a time when something important entered your life without introduction or explanation. You did not ask for it, you did not expect it, and yet it was exactly what was needed. What does it do to your understanding of God to know He sometimes sends exactly what you need before you even know to ask for it?

Deeper Reading

- **Genesis 14:17-20** -- The original encounter between Abraham and Melchizedek. Read what actually happened: the tithe given, the blessing spoken, the bread and wine brought. Nothing is explained. Sit with what the silence is doing.

- **Psalm 110:1-4** -- The Davidic prophecy where the Melchizedek priesthood is named and promised. Read it knowing this Psalm is the most quoted Old Testament text in the New Testament.
- **Hebrews 5:5-10** -- Where Melchizedek is first introduced in the letter. The author planted this seed and then paused. Chapter 7 is where it opens.

Reflection Questions

1. Why do you think the writer of Hebrews gives Melchizedek this much attention? What is at stake if Jesus is simply a better Levitical priest rather than a priest of a completely different order?
2. The text says Melchizedek met Abraham returning from battle, at his strongest moment, victorious, coming back from a win. Why does this encounter happen there, and not at a moment of weakness or need?
3. The bread and wine Melchizedek brings are given without demand. No payment required, no request made. What does a gift given at strength rather than at need tell you about the nature of the priesthood being described?
4. The deliberate silences of the text, no genealogy, no birth, no death, are significant. What do you normally look for when determining whether someone has authority? What happens when those normal markers are absent?

— WEEK 2 —

■ THE SYSTEM COULD NOT FINISH THE JOB

Hebrews 7:11-14 · July 5, 2026

Sunday Teaching

Verse 11 makes a startling argument: if the Levitical priesthood had been sufficient, why would God promise in Psalm 110 a priest of a completely different order? The promise itself is the indictment. Every institution that cannot complete what it was designed to do is either holding the place for something better or it has become an obstacle. The word perfection here, *teleiosis*, means something brought to its intended completion. The Levitical system was not a failure; it was a forerunner. But forerunners step aside.

The genealogical impossibility of verse 14 is not a deficiency in Jesus; it is a signal that the whole category is being replaced.

Wednesday Depth-Dive

Leviticus 16, the Day of Atonement, as the high watermark of what the Levitical system could achieve, and the fact that it had to be repeated every year. The repetition is the indictment. The system was designed to point forward; forerunners that refuse to step aside become obstacles. And the genealogical impossibility of Jesus as a Levitical priest: Moses spoke nothing of priests from Judah. That is not a deficiency. It is a signal that the whole category is being replaced.

Your Work This Week

Journal Prompt

What system in your own life, spiritual discipline, ministry structure, personal habit, relational pattern, have you been maintaining past its usefulness, not because it is working but because you do not know what comes next? The Levitical priesthood was not a failure; it was a forerunner. But it stayed past its season. What in your life needs to be recognized as a forerunner rather than a destination?

Deeper Reading

- **Leviticus 16:1-22** -- The Day of Atonement in full, the pinnacle of the Levitical system. Read what the system required at its highest point, and ask why it had to happen again the following year.
- **Hebrews 10:1-4** -- The impossibility of the blood of bulls and goats taking away sin. The law is a shadow, not the reality. Shadows are useful; they point to the thing. They are not the thing.
- **Galatians 3:24-25** -- The law as a tutor leading to Christ. The old system was always meant to bring us somewhere, not to be the destination.

Reflection Questions

1. The existence of a promise for a different kind of priest proves the first system was insufficient. What promise or prophecy in your own spiritual life is God using to show you that you need something better than what you currently have?
2. The Levitical priests were all from one tribe. Credentials were genetic. What is the practical problem with a priesthood where access to office is determined by birth rather than by the kind of life you hold?
3. Jesus has no institutional credential for the office He holds by the Levitical standard. In what areas of your life have you been waiting for institutional validation before you accept what God has already confirmed?
4. A change in priesthood required a change in law. You cannot get a new kind of priest through the old system. What old system are you expecting to produce a new kind of result?

— WEEK 3 —

■ HE LIVES

Hebrews 7:15-19 · July 12, 2026

Sunday Teaching

This message is built around the phrase *zoe akatalutos*, the indestructible life: the contrast between a law of physical requirement and the power of a life that cannot be broken. Every Levitical priest's tenure ended, and the end was not just biological, it was theological. Death created gaps in priestly ministry. A gap between one

priest's death and the next one's readiness was exposure: who speaks for me right now?

Then verse 19 plants the flag the whole Better Things series was building toward: a better hope, through which we draw near to God. We are not drawing near through a system. We are drawing near through a person who has conquered the only thing that ever stopped a priest from serving.

Wednesday Depth-Dive

A word study on *zoe akatalutos*, indestructible life, and the contrast between a law of physical requirement and the power of a life that cannot be broken. Every Levitical priest's tenure ended, creating gaps in priestly ministry. The word *proserchomai*, to draw near, in verse 19 is sanctuary language, the language of approach. The path to God has changed because the priest who holds it cannot die. Read alongside Hebrews 4:16 and Hebrews 10:22.

Your Work This Week

Journal Prompt

Every priest the old covenant had could be interrupted. Death. Sin. Age. Something always eventually broke the continuity. Write about a time when someone who was covering you spiritually, a pastor, a mentor, a parent, became unavailable. What filled that gap? And what would it have meant to know that the one covering you could not be interrupted?

Deeper Reading

- **Hebrews 4:14-16** -- Draw near with confidence to the throne of grace. We do not approach hoping we will be received. We approach because we already have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens.
- **Romans 8:1-4** -- The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. The same life that qualifies Jesus for His office has been placed in you.
- **Hebrews 10:19-22** -- The new and living way opened through the veil by His flesh. The access is open. The question is whether you will use it.

Reflection Questions

1. The qualification for the Levitical priesthood was physical descent. The qualification for Jesus' priesthood is an indestructible life. What qualifies the people you give spiritual authority to in your own life, position, longevity, credential, or the actual quality of the life they hold?
2. The better hope of verse 19 is the means by which we draw near to God. What has been your primary means of drawing near? Is it a practice, a system, or a person? What happens to your access when that means becomes unavailable?
3. *Zoe akatalutos*, indestructible life, is the power that backs Jesus' office. Not law, not lineage. What does it mean for your daily confidence to know that the life of your High Priest cannot be broken by anything that has ever threatened yours?
4. The hope of verse 19 is described as better precisely because what it connects you to cannot fail. Where in your life have you placed hope in something that could still fail?

— WEEK 4 —

■ THE OATH CHANGES EVERYTHING

Hebrews 7:20-22 · July 19, 2026

Sunday Teaching

The distinction that opens this message: the difference between a position held by appointment and a position secured by oath. The Levitical priests were installed by the requirements of the law. Jesus was installed by the direct oath of God the Father, citing Psalm 110:4: You are a priest forever. When God swears, He is not adding credibility to something uncertain; He is making it unalterable.

The conclusion in verse 22 is that this makes Jesus the guarantee, the surety, of a better covenant. Guarantee is a legal and commercial term. What does it mean that the mediation of the new covenant is not a policy or a protocol but a person, and that person is sworn in by God Himself?

Wednesday Depth-Dive

A return to Hebrews 6:13-18 on divine oath-taking: God swears by Himself because there is nothing greater. Then the word *engyos*, guarantor or surety, a commercial and legal term from the Greco-Roman world. A surety puts himself on the line for another's obligation; if the debtor cannot pay, the surety pays. Jesus as the surety of the new covenant takes personal responsibility for the covenant being fulfilled, not just mediated but guaranteed. A bridge forward to Jeremiah 31:31-34, which Hebrews quotes in full in chapter 8.

Your Work This Week

Journal Prompt

There is a difference between a commitment and an oath. A commitment is a promise. An oath is a promise made unalterable. Write about the promises you have received from God that you carry as commitments, you believe them most of the time, rather than as oaths, unalterable, impossible to break. What would change about your week if you carried even one of those promises as an oath?

Deeper Reading

- **Numbers 23:19** -- God is not a man that He should lie. He has said it and He will do it. The character behind the oath is the source of its certainty. Read it slowly and let it do its work.
- **Hebrews 6:13-18** -- The background on God swearing by Himself. The oath structure behind Abraham's promise is the same one behind Jesus' installation.
- **2 Corinthians 1:20** -- All the promises of God are yes in Christ Jesus. Christ is the yes to every promise God has ever made.

Reflection Questions

1. The Levitical priests were installed by institutional requirement. Jesus was installed by sworn oath. What is the practical difference, in your trust and confidence, between an office held by institutional requirement and an office secured by divine oath?
2. The word surety in verse 22 means someone who puts himself on the line for another's obligation. If the covenant fails, it fails in Him. What does it do to your understanding of salvation to know the guarantee is personal, not institutional?
3. The oath in Psalm 110:4 was sworn before Jesus accomplished anything in His earthly ministry. The oath preceded the work. What does that sequence tell you about how God establishes what He intends to keep?
4. Verse 22 says the oath makes Jesus the guarantee of a better covenant. What would a better covenant actually need to provide that the old one could not? What is the thing the old system was always reaching for but never grasped?

— WEEK 5 —

■ NO SUCCESSOR NEEDED

Hebrews 7:23-28 · July 26, 2026

Sunday Teaching

Open with the sheer number: there were many priests. Each one served. Each one died. Each one left a gap. Each gap required a replacement. And the gap itself, the space between one priest's death and the next one's full readiness, was exposure. The question every worshiper eventually faced: who speaks for me right now?

Verse 25 answers that question with the finality the whole chapter has been building toward: He always lives to make intercession for them. This office has no succession, and the reason is ontological, not institutional. He does not vacate the office because He cannot die. He does not delegate the intercession because He is always present. He does not need a replacement for the sacrifice because He offered one that required no repetition. There is one office in the universe where the succession question was settled before it was ever asked.

Wednesday Depth-Dive

What intercession actually is, and what it looks like in the ministry of Jesus, with Romans 8:34 alongside Hebrews 7:25. The sinlessness of Jesus in verses 26-28: holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens. The Aaronic high priest had to offer for himself before he could offer for the people; Jesus needs no such offering. Once for all, *hapax*, the finality of one sacrifice that never needs to be repeated. The congregation is not an unrepresented people waiting on the next priest. The priest who stepped into His office has not stepped down.

Your Work This Week

Journal Prompt

Every human institution you have ever trusted has dealt with the problem of succession. A leader steps down. A pastor moves on. A mentor dies. The institution continues but something changes in the gap. Write about one of those moments in your own spiritual life, a succession that changed something for you. Now sit with this: there is one office in the universe where that question has never been asked and never will be. What do you do with that?

Deeper Reading

- **Romans 8:31-34** -- Who will bring a charge? Who will condemn? Christ who died is at the right hand of God, interceding. Let the questions sit before you read the answers.
- **John 17:6-26** -- The High Priestly prayer of Jesus in the upper room. This is what His intercession sounds like. Notice what He actually asks for on your behalf.
- **1 John 2:1-2** -- We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. You have legal representation before God, and the Advocate has never lost a case argued on behalf of those who belong to Him.

Reflection Questions

1. The text contrasts the many who were priests with the one who holds His priesthood permanently. Where in your spiritual life have you been living with a gap that Jesus' permanent priesthood actually fills?
2. He always lives to make intercession. The word always is doing significant work. Not when called upon, not when the need is great enough, not when your record is clean. Always. What situation in your life right now needs you to hear always rather than sometimes?
3. Verse 26 describes Jesus as holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens. What does it mean to you that the one interceding for you has no personal stake in the outcome, no sin of His own that compromises His standing?
4. The series opened with a figure who appeared without genealogy, without birth, without death. It closes with a priest who will never vacate the office. What is the single thing from this series you will carry differently from this point forward?

This Weekly Companion is part of this series packet. Walk it at your own pace; let the text do its work.

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