


JESUS OVER EVERYTHING

HEBREWS READING GUIDE

WEEK 12



JESUS OVER EVERYTHING

WEEK 12
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CHURCH IN THE SQUARE

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EVERY DAY ...

... A PASSAGE TO READ,

... SOME COMMENTS TO CONSIDER,

... THREE QUESTIONS TO ASK,

... A PRAYER TO PRAY.



WEEK 12

HEBREWS 7:1-17

DAY 1
HEBREWS 7:1-3
SOUNDS LIKE JESUS
5

DAY 2
HEBREWS 7:4-7
TRUE GREATNESS
7

DAY 3
HEBREWS 7:8-10
THE IMMORTAL MAN
9

DAY 4
HEBREWS 7:11-14
SHADOWS PREPARE US FOR
SUBSTANCE
11

DAY 5
HEBREWS 7:15-17
AN INDESTRUCTIBLE LIFE
13

DAY 1

SOUNDS LIKE JESUS

First read Hebrews 7: 1-3.

It's easy to get lost in this passage. The writer shifts away from direct instructions for his readers and into a lengthy characterization of a mysterious figure named Melchizedek. Melchizedek shows up in only two other places in the Bible. The first is his meeting with Abraham which this passage talks about (see Genesis 17:17-24). The second is when the psalmist connects him with the Anointed One (see Psalm 110:4, Hebrews talks about that one too in 5:6).

Melchizedek seems random, except for the fact that we've just been told that Jesus became, ***"a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek"*** (6:20). That means learning about Melchizedek teaches us about Jesus. Here we're told Melchizedek is a ***"priest of the Most High God," a "king of righteousness," and a "king of peace"*** (v.1,2). Sounds like Jesus.

However, everything that would qualify Melchizedek to be a legitimate Levitical priest is missing (see Numbers 3:10,15-16). Specifically, he has no father or mother, nor genealogy, ***"neither beginning of days nor end of life"*** (v.3). That sounds like Jesus too. Like Melchizedek, Jesus does not fit the mold of our human expectations for healing--selected by God, rejected by people. And yet, Jesus is the great, righteous, peaceful, and eternal priest our souls long for.

DAY 1

SOUNDS LIKE JESUS

1. How does this passage point us to Jesus?
2. What misguided expectations have you had for God?
3. How does Jesus shape righteousness and peace in us?

Heavenly Father ...

Daily I'm tempted to make you fit the mold of my limited imagination. Break again the limits I foolishly place upon you and show me your true greatness, righteousness, and peace through Christ.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 2

TRUE GREATNESS

First read Hebrews 7:4-7.

Given Melchizedek's unimpressive human credentials, the writer of Hebrews continues to press meaning into his meeting with Abraham. Though he was not in the line of Levi (like other priests), **"the patriarch gave a tenth of the spoils"** to Melchizedek (vv.4,6). A tithe was meant to go to the Levitical priests. It was their divine inheritance. But Abraham's offering goes to Melchizedek.

This is about the gift and the giver. The gift proves Melchizedek's legitimacy as a priest—he receives the priestly blessing. The giver proves Melchizedek's greatness. Abraham is the patriarch of the nation of Israel (Isaiah 51:2). He's the one described as the friend of God (2 Chronicles 20:7). And when the great Abraham returns from his victorious vanquishment of four northern kings, *to whom does he pay tribute? Who does this great man show deference?* Melchizedek.

Though our cultures are worlds apart it's easy enough to understand that "the one who receives the tithe ... is greater than the one who gives the tithe" (NTC, 187). This is the principle Hebrews is developing, **"the inferior is blessed by the superior"** (v.7). And at every increased expression of greatness, our writer prepares us for the true and better priest to whom even the eternally esteemed Melchizedek will soon pay tribute. As Melchizedek is greater than Abraham, Jesus is greater than Melchizedek.

DAY 2

TRUE GREATNESS

1. What makes Jesus great?
2. How does your life reflect the greatness of Jesus?
3. What's different about the gospel's expression of greatness and the way greatness is viewed in our world?

Heavenly Father ...

In a world ruled by power, I'm shamed by my weakness. In a world owned by money, I'm fearful of not having enough. In a world obsessed with celebrity, I'm easily dissatisfied by faithfulness. I'm easily confused by what is truly good, true, and beautiful. Amidst the allure of fleeting greatness, empower me to follow your Son, my great high priest.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 3

THE IMMORTAL MAN

First read Hebrews 7:8-10.

The priesthood was all about moral purity. Priests were tasked by God to enter into the “holy of holies” of the temple and make sacrifices for people’s sins. Despite this divine task, priests were simply “mortal men” (v.8). It’s a bit of an oxymoron. To be a man, a human is to be mortal. Like you and me, Levitical priests were born in sin and, one day eventually died. Impure priests are called to purify God’s people. This is yet another distinction of Melchizedek that points us to Christ.

Melchizedek is the **“one of whom it is testified that he lives”** (v.8). This is a reiteration of the fact that he has **“neither beginning of days nor end of life”** (v.3). Throughout Scripture Jesus embraces this paradox of the immortal man. Theologians call it the hypostatic union. Jesus is fully human yet fully divine. To be sure that’s hard to understand. Writer Anne Lamott quips, “I didn't need to understand the hypostatic unity of the Trinity; I just needed to turn my life over to whoever came up with redwood trees” (*Plan B*, 296). To be sure, the nature of Christ is beyond our complete comprehension. (The nature of trees blows our minds!)

Let’s just say, the Son of God was never born. That means he was never born in sin. And so his sacrifice accomplishes a purity that bears eternal power. When we’re washed clean by this priest, shame and guilt, and sin are put to death forever.

DAY 3

THE IMMORTAL MAN

1. Why do you think Jesus' eternal nature is so important to understand?
2. How ought our mortality humble us?
3. How does Jesus' eternal nature enhance your understanding of the cross?

Heavenly Father ...

Who am I that you are mindful of me? Who am I that you care for me? Though I'm sinful and mortal, in you I'm purified and receive eternal life in Christ. Settle my soul in this truth today.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 4 SHADOWS PREPARE US FOR SUBSTANCE

First read Hebrews 7:11-14.

Jesus makes all things new. In Hebrews alone, he welcomes us to new rest (4:8), inaugurates a new covenant (8:13), ushers in a new priesthood, and establishes a new law (v.11-14). When Jesus makes something new that doesn't mean the old is bad. Rather, the old has been fulfilled in the new.

For instance, as our writer explains here, perfection was never meant to be **"attainable through the Levitical priesthood"** (v.11). The old is not a mistake. The old is not a first attempt. The old is a setup. Our previous rest, covenant, priesthood, and law prepare us to see and savor the new. The Apostle Paul says, **"These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ"** (Colossians 2:17). It's easy to despise the past and venerate the novel, latest, and now. However, our appreciation, enjoyment, and understanding of the new is always connected to the lessons of our previous experiences. Shadows prepare us for substance.

With a season of earthly priests and ceremonial laws a longing grows. We long for a true and better priest. We long for a true and better law. This is why Jesus said, **"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them"** (Matthew 5:17). In God's providence, a new beginning is not a correction or do over. It's a promised kept.

DAY 4 SHADOWS PREPARE US FOR SUBSTANCE

1. How does God's invitation to prepare demonstrate his kindness?
2. What "new thing" are you longing for?
3. How does Christ's death and resurrection assure us that all things will be made new?

Heavenly Father ...

Daily I find myself longing for change, redemption, and healing. Thank you that in you, all things are made new. Amidst the shadows of this age, prepare me for the ever-increasing substance of your Son, Jesus Christ.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 5

AN INDESTRUCTIBLE LIFE

First read Hebrews 7:15-17.

Jesus' priesthood is not established in the Levitical order. Rather, it ***"arises in the likeness of Melchizedek"*** (v.15). And a different origin means a different nature. Jesus' saving work is unlike the saving work of Israel's priests because Jesus' nature is unlike their nature (v.16,17).

Paul explains to Christians in Colossae that Jesus' unique origin and nature qualify him for unique work. He says, ***"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation ... For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross"*** (Colossians 1:15,19-20). Jesus is divine. Therefore his saving work is holistic and eternal. That means the haunting memories of bad decisions, the chaos in your family, and the turmoil of our city have a lasting hope available to them. A hope which cures every ailment. And this ***"power of an indestructible life"*** dwells with the people of God (v.16).

Of course, this doesn't mean we know precisely when, where, and how God will make things right in this life. But it does mean we know what God can do through Christ, and what he promises to do when Christ returns. He will reconcile all things because he's a priest forever.

DAY 5


AN INDESTRUCTIBLE LIFE

1. How does Jesus' indestructible nature give you hope in this life?
2. In what spaces and places are you longing for hope and healing? In your life? In the lives of those around you?
3. In Christ, your life is indestructible too. How ought this change the way you live this week?

Heavenly Father ...

(Reflect on the past number of days or even weeks. Tell the Lord how you've seen his grace, love, and faithfulness.)

In Jesus' Name, Amen.



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