Tonight our message will come out of Psalm 110, atleast to start…so if you would turn in your Bible to Psalm 110….. Psalm 110. We will mainly be dealing with verse 4 here before we ultimately move into Hebrews… but since this is such a short Psalm, I’d like us to go ahead and read all 7 verses for context. Psalm 110, starting at verse 1…..

**Psalm 110**

**1** The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

**2** The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.

**3** Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.

**4**  The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

**5** The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.

**6** He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries.

**7** He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head

Preface:

I'm confident that everybody in this church tonight knows and believes that the Holy Spirit is the ultimate author of Scripture. As Peter reminds us, “no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God”. (II Pet. 1:21). Jesus hinted this same idea when he quoted the first verse of this very Psalm in Matthew 22:43— when he baffled the Pharisees by asking how it was possible that “David in the Spirit “ could call the Messiah ‘Lord’ if the Messiah was his son. We see this same idea echoed again in Acts 4 as the early disciples gathered for prayer after Peter and John had been released from jail…they declared that David spoke of the Messiah “by the Holy Spirit,”. The disciples knew, just as we know, that David might’ve been doing the writing, but it was God who was doing the authoring…

God has hidden special insights and little nuggets of truth all throughout the Bible, and not always in the words and their meaning either….sometimes there is special meaning to be found in how the words are put together….and when you see it , you just know that it didn’t come out of the human mind… God put it there….I think that Psalm 110 provides us with an example of what I’m talking about.

 Let’s look at verses 1-3…..where we read:

“The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.”

It’s pretty obvious as we read those first 3 verses, that David is describing is the ascension and enthronement of Jesus Christ, as the righteous and eternal King….okay lets skip by verse 4 for the moment and read verses 5 through 7, :

“The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries. He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head”

Once again its clear to us that David is describing Christ's reign as King here…albeit from a slightly different perspective. In those first 3 verses, David is describing Christ’s Kingship as it relates to the church….but down in verses 5-7 David is describing Christ's Kingship in relation to those who oppose Him….but it’s pretty clear to us that David is describing the Royal Kingship of Christ in all 6 of those verses. Ok so now let’s now go back and read verse 4:

“ The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”

Suddenly, in this verse, David switches gears on us as he goes from describing the Kingship of Christ in verses 1-3 to describing the priesthood of Christ in verse 4, and then back to the Kingship of Christ again in verse 5-7…it almost seems out of place, we know it’s not….its there for a reason…but why?? Why would David slide that one verse about the priesthood of the coming Messiah right smack in the middle of a psalm that otherwise is exclusively focused on his Kingship? I think this is an example of one of those hidden nuggets I mentioned earlier….there is truth to be found not only in the words of this Psalm and their meaning….But also in its very structure. I believe that God had David craft this psalm in this way in order to bring to our attention an important truth…..that it is the work that Christ did, does, and will do, on our behalf as our perfect High Priest that lies at the center of our salvation. The great theologian John Flavel once said that salvation is revealed to us by Christ as prophet, and applied to us by Christ as King, but it is through Christ as High Priest that our salvation is achieved….and If we're being honest, most of us will probably admit that we don’t normally think in terms of Jesus as our High Priest. Seriously, I bet there is a church named “Christ the King Church” in every city in America, but have you ever heard of one called “Christ the Priest" Church? The whole priesthood concept is sort of foreign to the Baptist Christian. But nevertheless it’s imperative for us to understand, not only, that Jesus is our High Priest, but also what that means and why having Jesus as our High Priest is so important.

Let’s look again at verse 4…..

“The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”

We read that God has sworn an oath…He has promised and will not change his mind…..there are few things in life that we can count on, people lie and things change but God doesn't ….we can ALWAYS count on God….in a world of uncertainty, it’s a beautiful thing to know that no matter what comes our way, we can stand on the promises of God.

Then down the end of the verse we run into the name Melchizedek, so who is Melchizedek and what does it mean that Jesus is a priest “in the order of Melchizedek"?

 Well way back in the 14th chapter of Genesis there is the story about the war between the Kings….and to make a short story shorter, there are 4 Kings who come and capture the cities of Soddom and Gomorrah, and they kidnap Lot and all his things,. So then Abraham finds out that Lot has been taken and he is determined to go rescue him. The Bible tells us that Abraham marshals up 318 men and goes in pursuit of Lots kidnappers. He manages to catches up to them and defeats them in order to rescue Lot, and all the other people and things that were taken from Sodom. Then as Abraham is returning home, down in Gen. 14 17-20, we are first introduced to Melchizedek….the Bible says

**18**And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.

**19**And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:

**20**And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.

These 3 verses represent all of the primary information that we have on Melchisedek. Out of nowhere, he suddenly appears on the scene…we are told that he’s a King and a priest who gives blessing to and recieves tithes from Abraham…and then he disappears again. We don’t hear anything about him again until around 1000 years later when David mentions his name in verse 4 of Psalm 110, and then roughly another 1000 years go by before he is mentioned again in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and it is to the 7th chapter of Hebrews that we will now turn to try and get a better understanding of what it means to say that Jesus is a priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 7: 1-10

1 For this Melchisedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

2 To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;

3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.

4 Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

5 And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham:

6 But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.

7 And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.

8 And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.

9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham.

10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.

1. Shadows of Greater Things to Come

The first thing is to understand that Paul is using typology to explain the nature of Christ as priest and king. Typology is “a hermeneutical or interpretive concept in which a Biblical place… person… event… office… or object… is used as a pattern to interpret something that is revealed later and shares similar characteristics. You have types and antitypes…..the type comes first, and then the antitype comes along later and represents the fulfillment of the original person or event. Its sort of like a prophetic language, explaining in a shadowy way some future event or person. The type is more direct than an illustration, but not as clear as a direct prophecy it basically gives us a picture of what SHALL come to pass through the antitype.

Numbers 21 is a good example of the whole type-antitype concept that pretty easy to see, if you remember, in Numbers 21 God sends down poisonous serpents to punish the Israelites BC they have been speaking against He and Moses….and then we are told that God instructed Moses to make a bronze serpent and to lift it up on a pole so the folks who had been bitten could look upon it and be healed. That brass serpent on a pole was a type, and Christ on the cross was it’s antitype. Jesus confirms this in John 3:14, when He says “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness (the type) , even so must the Son of Man be lifted up (the antitype).”

It is this type/antitype concept that Paul is using when he refers to Melchizedek…..Melchizedek is the type…Jesus Christ is the antitype.

2. Representation

Also Paul hits on the concept of representation. Down in verses 9 and 10 He writes “And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.” Even though Levi was the great-grandson of Abraham and wouldn’t be born for quite a long time, Levi is thought of as having paid tithes and expressed his subordination to Melchizedek through Abraham. That idea of Levi paying tithes when he was “still in the loins of his father” carries the concept of representation. It might seem strange to us that the actions of a person in one generation be looked at as the actions of another person from a later generation…..but we see that pattern repeated all throughout the Bible. Adam acted as the representative for the whole human race, and the high priest of Israel acted for the whole nation on the Day of Atonement. In a simple way, Abraham acted for Aaron in acknowledging the superiority of Melchizedek. It is through this concept of representation that Paul can make the claim that the priesthood of Jesus Christ is greater than that of the Aaronic/ Levitical priesthood.

II. Substance of Christ’s Priesthood

Up to this point weve been sort of dealing in the shadows, but in order to really understand what Paul is getting at its important that we understand that the focus of this text is really not on Melchizedek, but rather on Jesus Christ….and by looking at details of this Old Testament character we are able to come to a clearer understanding of our Lord Jesus Christ, and why He is greater than all of the Aaronic or Levitical priesthood.

1. Intrinsic Character

In the second verse Paul hits on the name and office of Melchizedek to help us understand the natural, intrinsic character of Jesus Christ. He writes

 “For this Melchizedek, king of Salem…was first of all, by the translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace.”

 The combination of the Hebrew words malki (which means my king) and tsedek (which means righteousness) give us the name, Melchizedek. This was not a coincidence. His name was given as a shadow of the One who was to come 2000 years later. In Jewish culture, a name was to represent one’s character. So when a person would go through a significant change in his life, his name might be changed to reflect it...we see that with Abram/Abraham and Jacob/Israel. Here the name Melchizedek explains to us the very nature of Christ as one who rules over creation and the redeemed in righteousness. “Righteousness” refers to the moral character, attitude, and behavior of our Saviour, for He alone incarnated righteousness. He is “the Righteous One” and the essence of our righteousness. Jesus displayed righteousness in all of His dealings with others, and here the emphasis is upon his righteousness being displayed in the way He rules over His people. And as Christians, we can take great comfort in knowing that Jesus will never contradict His character in the way that He works in our lives. Human history is full of kings and dictators and presidents who have lacked righteous character, and have ended up terrorizing their people because of it. But we never have to worry about that with our King….Christ is never like that! We are secure in his righteousness. For these early Christians who were under the strain of intense persecution it was vital that they understood that Christ the King rules in righteousness.

“King of Salem,” is explained to mean “king of peace…as the word Salem is the English equivalent of the Jewish “shalom” which means peace. It is believed that Melchizedek ruled over the ancient Canaanite city that would eventually come to be known as Jerusalem. There he exercised a godly rule and the city was blessed with peace. But his title was merely a shadow of the lasting, eternal peace that comes through Jesus Christ. Isaiah prophesied that He would be called, “the Prince of peace”. In Ephesians 2:14-16 Paul declared Christ to be our peace who through His own death delivered us from being at enmity with God. The need for peace has never changed; our circumstances may be different, but the struggle of mankind to live at peace with God has existed since Adam. It is only through the justification that is in Christ, received by faith, that “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1).

Let’s go back to our first century audience for a moment. All of life was coming unglued for them. Threatened by persecution on one hand, and fear of having embraced the wrong religion on the other, they were distraught and needed assurance and this entire letter was meant to provide that assurance.

2. Effective mediator

The primary message Paul is meaning to get across in Hebrews 7 is that Jesus Christ is an infinitely superior mediator to the priests of the Aaronic or Levitical order. The Levitical priesthood was in effect for hundreds of years and there was never a single priest who was able to effectively mediate the way to God for the people. Their priestly duties were temporary, serving for 30 years if they lived long enough, and then being replaced by someone else. They offered sacrifices that could not take away sin, based upon a covenant that could never make the people righteous. But in Christ we have a priest after the order of Melchizedek…a priest who would never be replaced and whose work would be eternally effective….Verse 3 describes Melchizedek as being “Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually.”

That verse has given a lot of people a lot of different ideas about Melchizedek….Some have taken this to mean that Melchizedek was an angel or even a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ. But we know he couldn’t be an angel because we know that he was a priest, and priests are always taken from among men…..they must know what it’s like to be human and to struggle against temptation….angels don’t know what it’s like to be human...also, if Melchizedek was actually Jesus before he was Jesus then why would Paul tell us that he was made LIKE the Son of God…the word LIKE there implies that we are talking about two different people. The Genesis 14 text does not tell us anything about the genealogy of Melchizedek, and that is the point that Paul is trying to make here…genealogy was incredibly important to Jewish culture, and all of the other Old Testament worshipers of God are identified through their genealogies. YET Melchizedek stands alone—mysteriously alone! We know that nothing in the bible is an accident… and we can assume that God wanted the genealogy of Melchizedek left out in order to make him stand out to us above the rest… We are meant to see him as a picture of the eternal nature of Jesus Christ

Paul is deliberately trying to paint contrasts between the temporary, ineffective nature, and the eternal, perfect effectiveness of the priesthood of Christ. Later in chapter 7 Paul goes on to talk about Christ's continual intercession on our behalf and how that gives us assurance of our salvation but he makes his case for that here. Unlike the Levitical priests, the priesthood of Jesus Christ, His mediation and intercession on our behalf, never has an end, it never faces a loss, and it is ALWAYS SUFFICIENT .

What is the point of all this for us today? Sometimes we struggle with trying to take on the role of mediator for our lives. We try to use our works or religious activities or moral actions or Christian service as a way to bring ourselves into the presence of God. We often try to be our own priests…and we are only setting ourselves up for failure and frustration… because we lose sight of the fact that Jesus Christ is our only effective mediator.

3. Both King and Priest

During Jesus’ earthly ministry, the office of high priest had become coupled with the unofficial rulership of the people of Israel. Annas and Caiaphas were the two most powerful people in Israel and they served alternately as high priest. But not being satisfied with the office of spiritual leader and mediator for the people, they sought to add to it the iron fisted, often deceptive, rule over Israel. But the high priest of the Aaronic or Levitical order was not to be king….and the King was not to be priest. God was serious about this…Remember He punished King Saul for performing priestly duties, and He struck King Uzziah with leprosy for going and burning incense in the temple, because only priests were allowed to do that. God’s high priest was not to live with the temptation of wielding power without integrity and thus desecrating the office of high priest. Nor was he to devote himself to ruling in favor of mediating before God on behalf of the people. The Levitical priests were unqualified to simultaneously serve as priest and king. But not so with Jesus Christ!

Melchizedek is identified as, “king of Salem, priest of the Most High God.” United in this one man were the offices of king and priest as a foreshadowing of Christ who would unite these offices in perfect harmony.

III. Sufficiency of Christ’s Priesthood

So what difference does this make in our daily life?

 Over In Hebrews chapter 6 Paul is trying encourage the Christians to see the hope that is in Jesus Christ…he says that hope is “an anchor of the soul,” one that is certain for eternity, having entered “within the veil”. It is in reference to the eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ that he now argues for the sufficiency of Christ’s priesthood over against the Levitical priesthood that the Hebrews were being told they must return to. Paul is saying listen….not only is Christ an eternal Priest of an order that is separate from the Levitical priesthood….but the priestly ministry of Jesus Christ is BETTER than the Aaronic priesthood….IN EVERY WAY. And since that is true, you do not need to continue clinging to the old order, you can let go of it, and you can trust in the superiority of Christ as your Great and Perfect High Priest.

 He's saying to them why would you ever want to go back to the burdensome rituals and sacrifices that could never take away your sins, never make you righteous in the sight of God…why go back to that fallen, human priest who would never be able to bring you salvation….who would never be able to bring you even one step closer to God, when you have Jesus Christ- the PERFECT PRIEST, who offered His own life as a sacrifice for your sins, who placated Gods wrath for you, who continually and perpetually intercedes for you….so that you can be joined in fellowship to God FOREVER AND EVER…WHY GO BACK TO THE IMPERFECT, WHEN YOU ALREADY HAVE IT ALL?? It’s Insanity!

To help them understand that Paul, in verse 4, refers to the “shadow” of Melchizedek giving the priestly blessing to Abraham and receiving tithes from Abraham. We read:

“Now observe how great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the choicest spoils.”

The Jewish culture was very patriarchal, and also there was great respect for ones elders…especially male elders. In their minds a Father was always superior to, or greater in status and importance than his sons….and blessings were always conferred from the man with greater status to the man of lesser status. Yet here we have Abraham, the great patriarch…receiving a blessing from Melchisedek and offering tithes to him. Abraham was almost like Superman in their eyes…nobody could be greater than Him, yet he was acknowledging that Melchizedek was his superior.

But that was Abraham. What does this have to do with the Levitical priesthood? This gets back to that idea of representation that we talked about earlier, Paul explains that from even before its inception, whole Levitical priesthood was subordinated before the greater Melchizedek. Basically the idea is that since Melchizedek was superior to Abraham, he was superior to any of the Aaronic/Levitical priests because they were all descended out of Abraham.

Look at verse 5:” those indeed of the sons of Levi, who receive the priest’s office have commandment in the Law to collect a tenth from the people that is, from their brethren, although these are descended from Abraham.

We remember that, when Israel was divided between the 12 tribes, the descendants of Levi received no inheritance in the land….their inheritance was God, which I think is a pretty good deal myself. But BC of that, God had given them certain cities within the territories of the other tribes, and the other tribes were commanded to support them through their tithes.

Paul continues on in verses 6 and 7

“But the one whose genealogy is not traced from them [ talking about Melchizedek] collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises. But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater.”

Again there’s the idea that the man of greater status always gives the blessing and the man of lesser status receives. Paul id trying to get them to think…If the great Abraham was blessed by an even greater Melchizedek, and Melchizedek is merely a shadow of Christ….then how unspeakably awesome Christ must be!

I’ll try to quickly finish up with verses 8 through 10

8 And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.

9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham.

10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.

The Levitical priesthood was never intended to be a permanent solution, it was a shadow of better things that God had in store; and its inadequacy was proved before it ever existed when Abraham acknowledged the superior priestly ministry of Melchizedek. It wouldve been utter foolishness for these early Christians to throw their hope and confidence in Christ away by turning back to a upon animal sacrifices offered by fallen men, who needed to offer sacrifices for their OWN sins. They’d be putting their trust in the inferior, temporal, and inadequate rather than in the superior, eternal, and perfect sufficiency of Jesus Christ. No…. the old priesthood needed be left behind to die the death that God had ALWAYS meant for it to die in order to embrace the new covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

As modern Christians, we might not have the temptation to run to a Levitical priest and offer an animal sacrifice, but we are often tempted to depend upon lesser priests and the worthless sacrifices of human ingenuity for assurance. Some of us might struggle to keep our spiritual heads above the rushing waters of temptation, doubt, and fear. But tonight we can rest easy, being assured that, from even before the time that Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden….even before the words “Let There Be" ever were… the “GREAT I AM” already had a plan in place to bring us back to Him….and He worked through thousands of years and generations of families to place His eternal Son as the Great High Priest of the Redeemed. All of the sacrifices and priestly mediators before…they were merely types of which Jesus Christ is the perfect fulfillment. There is none other like Him…none that even come close!

No one else can wash away your sin. No one else can mediate for you before the throne of God with perfect satisfaction. No one else can eternally intercede for you and rule over your chaotic life in order to bring you through from the dark depths of despair to the peaceful warmth of Heaven’s bright shore. No one but our high priest and king, Jesus Christ, is able to give us that sure and steadfast hope that anchors our soul for all eternity!

LET US PRAY