

Hebrews 4:14-7:28

Priests and High Priests
Jesus and Melchizedek

Plus some Warnings

... And also a few thoughts about
reading the Bible

Reading a book

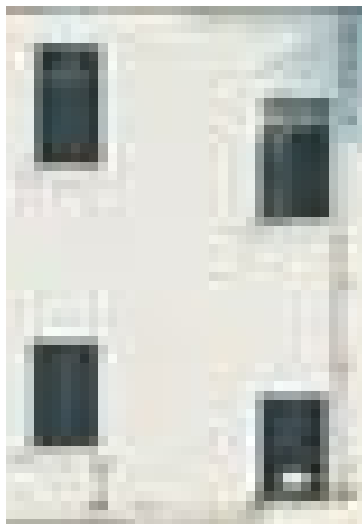
- Usually we read a book from the beginning to the end ... Unless we give up!
- The exceptions are:
 - Dictionaries and encyclopaedias
 - When you are preparing an essay!!!
- The Bible is a collection (mini library?) of 66 books
 - So it makes sense to read each book from beginning to end ... as we are doing with Hebrews
 - You don't have to read the whole Bible from beginning to end ... but it isn't a bad idea!

CONTEXT

- If you take a **text** out of its **context** you are left with a **con!!!**
- **Example:** In **Psalm 14:1** we read: “There is no God”!!!
- However, the whole verse says:

The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.”
- Looking at a verse, or even several verses, in isolation can be misleading.
- Chapters and verses were **NOT** in the original!
- The **context** may be several chapters, or even the whole book.
- **Example:** Old Testament prophecies quoted in the New Testament.

Out of context???



Hebrews 4:16-7:28 in context

- We have already looked at the preceding chapters.
- That is one great advantage of going through a book.
- **What was in Hebrews 1-4???**
- *Jesus is greater than:*
 - **A**ngels
 - **M**oses
- *There are warnings about:*
 - **A**postacy ... turning away from God
 - **M**issing out, through unbelief.

Hebrews 4:14-16

¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.

¹⁶ Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Connecting Words

¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. **Hebrews 4:14**

- *If you see a “therefore” you should ask:
“What is it there for?”*
- It means that what is being written follows on from what was written earlier.
- So try to understand the logic.

Connecting Words

Therefore, hence, so, then - all tell us that what is coming follows on from what was written earlier. →

Because, for, since - tell us that we are about to be told the reason behind what has just been written. ←

- These words all show the close connection between what we are about to read and the previous part.
- ***Therefore***, if you see one of these words, always look back and try to understand the connection.

Hebrews 4:14 “Since...”

“Therefore, *since* we have a great high priest ... Jesus the Son of God ...”

How are we supposed to know this???

Has something already been written about this?

1:3 Jesus has provided purification for sins

2:10 Jesus was made perfect by suffering

2:17-18 Made like His brothers to become a merciful and faithful High Priest

3:1 Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest ...

Hebrews 4:14-16

We have a Great High Priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God.

THEREFORE

Let us hold firmly to the faith we profess

FOR/BECAUSE

We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses

BUT

We have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin.

THEN/THEREFORE

Let us approach God's throne of grace with confidence

SO THAT

We may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need.

Hebrews 4:14-16

Application

FIRST try to understand what the passage meant to the original readers,

THEN try to apply it to yourself.

- It can't mean something totally different to you, from what it meant to them.
- The principles may apply in a new and different situation.
- Ask yourself, **WHY** was this passage/letter written?

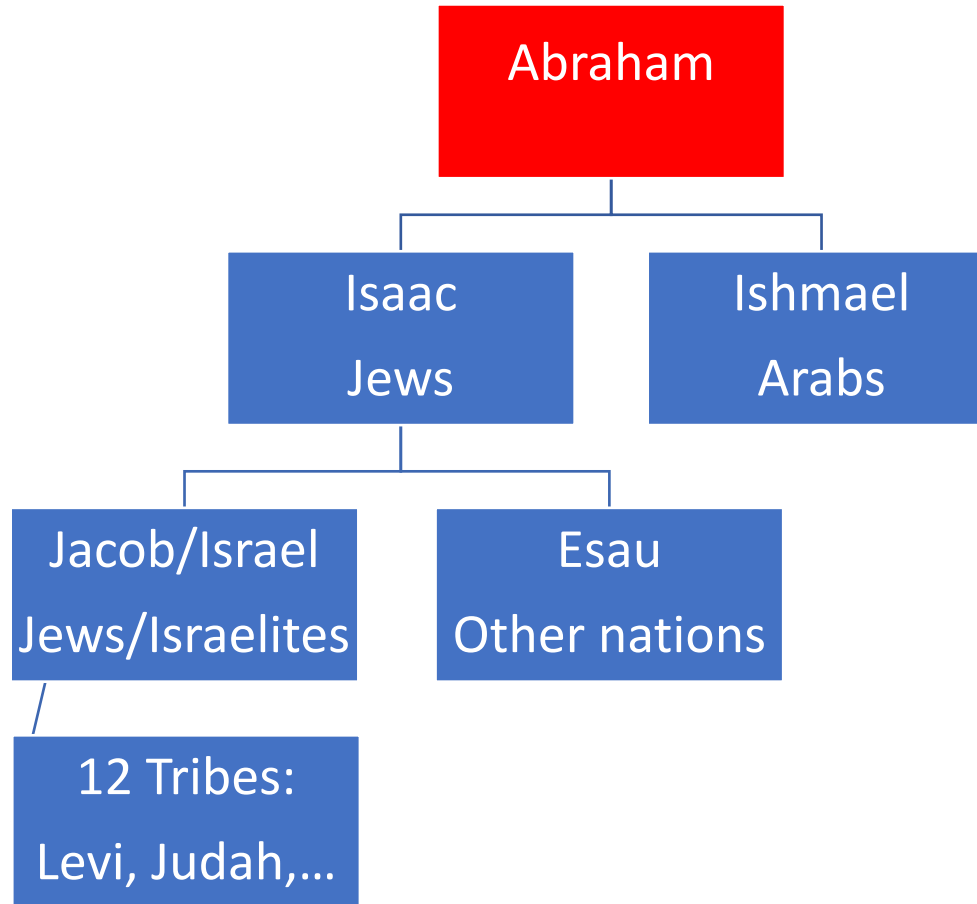
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Abraham and his Descendants



Priests and High Priests

- Aaron, Moses' brother, was the first High Priest
- The priests were the descendants of Aaron
- Different Levite clans had different responsibilities associated with the tabernacle or the temple
- The priests offered sacrifices from the people to God, ***according to the Laws God had given them***
- The sacrifices were for sin, but also for thanksgiving
- Once a year the High Priest went into the Holy of Holies to offer sacrifices on the Day of Atonement
- **Jesus came from the tribe of Judah ... not Levi!!!**

Hebrews 5:1-4

¹ Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

² He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness.

³ This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people.

⁴ And no one takes this honour on himself, but he receives it when called by God, just as Aaron was.

Hebrews 5:5-6

⁵ In the same way, Christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him,

“You are my Son;

today I have become your Father.” ***Psalm 2:7***

⁶ And he says in another place,

“You are a priest forever,

in the order of Melchizedek.” ***Psalm 110:4***

- Jesus is God the Son ... but who is Melchizedek???

Melchizedek

- We read about him in **Genesis 14** when he met **Abraham** **About 2000 BC**
- **King David** refers to him in **Psalms 110** **About 1000 BC**
- He is written about in **Hebrews 5-7** **About AD 70**
- We are talking about him today **In AD 2021**

So it is only about 4000 years from Melchizedek to us!!!

Melchizedek in Genesis 14

There were lots of battles between various “kings”

- After one of these, Abraham’s nephew, Lot, and his relatives were captured
- Abraham and his 318 men rescued Lot and his relatives

Melchizedek

- The king of Salem
- The priest of God Most High
- Brought Abraham bread and wine
- Blessed Abraham

Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything.

Melchizedek in Psalm 110

The Psalm was written by King David.

Verse 1 starts: **“The LORD said to my Lord”**

- “**The LORD**” means the Hebrew is **YHWH**: God’s name
- “**Lord**” is the Hebrew **Adonai**, which is used to refer to God, as a term of respect.
- Here King David is referring to YHWH *and* “David’s Lord”.

Verse 4 says:

The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind:

You are a priest for ever, in the order of Melchizedek.

- So God, through the writer of the letter to the Hebrews, refers this promise to Jesus, in verse 6.

Hebrews 5:7-10

⁷ During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

⁸ Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered

⁹ and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him

¹⁰ and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 4:14-5:10

The Aaronic priests

- Selected from among men
- Represent people to God
- Subject to weakness = sin
- Had to offer sacrifices for their own sins
- Must be called by God
- A descendant of Aaron

Jesus the Great High Priest

- God the Son
- Tempted in every way like us
- Without sin
- Appointed by God
- After the order of Melchizedek
- Learned obedience through suffering
- Made perfect as our High Priest

Hebrews 5:11-14

¹¹ We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand.

¹² In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!

¹³ Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.

¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

Lots of room for improvement!!!

Hebrews 6:1-3

¹ Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of

- repentance from acts that lead to death,
- and of faith in God,
- ² instruction about cleansing rites/baptisms
- the laying on of hands,
- the resurrection of the dead,
- and eternal judgment.

³ And God permitting, we will do so.

Hebrews 6:4-8

⁴ It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵ who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age ⁶ and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance. To their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

⁷ Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. ⁸ But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.

Hebrews 6:9-12

⁹ Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are convinced of better things in your case – the things that have to do with salvation.

¹⁰ God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. ¹¹ We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized.

¹² We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

Hebrews 6:13-18

- God tested Abraham by telling him to sacrifice His son, Isaac.
- Abraham obeyed God ... at the last minute God provided a ram for the sacrifice.
- Then God swore by Himself that He would bless Abraham and give him many descendants.
- God also confirmed the promise about a priest after the order of Melchizedek with an oath.

Psalm 110:4

The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind:

You are a priest for ever, in the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 6:19-20

¹⁹ We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, ²⁰ where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest for ever, in the order of Melchizedek.

- “Hope” in the New Testament means something which is certain, but which hasn’t yet happened.
- **What is the purpose of an “anchor”?**
- **What is another phrase for “the inner sanctuary”?**
- **What does this mean to us?**

Hebrews 7:1-10

- Melchizedek was king of Salem and “king of peace”.
- He was also priest of God Most High ... hundreds of years before Aaron and the Levites existed!
- The Law of Moses prohibited kings from being priests.
- Melchizedek blessed Abraham, and Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth of the plunder ... both of which show that Melchizedek was greater than Abraham ... and hence greater than Levi.
- The Levitical priests had to trace their ancestry back to Aaron, but there is no record of Melchizedek’s ancestry.

Hebrews 7:11-14

¹¹ If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood—and indeed the law given to the people established that priesthood—why was there still need for another priest to come, one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron?

¹² For when the priesthood is changed, the law must be changed also.

¹³ He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. ¹⁴ For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.

Hebrews 7:15-26

- Jesus, like Melchizedek, was not appointed as High Priest because of His ancestry
- Jesus was appointed by God on the basis of His sonship, His “indestructible life”, and by God’s oath
- God’s oath made Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant/agreement
- The descendants of Aaron died ... Jesus lives forever, so He has a permanent priesthood
- He can save completely those who come to Him, because He always lives to pray for them.

Hebrews 7:26-28

²⁶ Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

²⁷ Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.

²⁸ For the law appoints as high priests men in all their weakness; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

Hebrews 4:16-7:28

Jesus is the perfect High Priest:

- He was appointed by God and lives forever
- He is God and not just a man
- His priesthood is eternal, nobody will replace Him
- Because He became a man and was tempted as we are, He understands us
- Therefore we can approach God to receive mercy and grace
- In the following chapters there is even more!!!

Reading the Bible

As we read the Bible:

- Read a whole book, not just a section or verses.
- Take note of the connecting words; look for the logic.
- First work out what it meant to the original readers.
- Ask: **WHY** did God cause the author to write these things? What is the purpose?
- Apply it to yourself.
- At every stage, ask God to help you.