Jesus Is Greater Than The Former Priests

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[0:00] If you would take your Bibles and turn with me to Hebrews chapter 7. We've been walking through this book that is actually a sermon that was written down at some point.

! And our theme has been Jesus over everything. As we just sang a moment ago, Jesus is over everything in this book.
We've seen Jesus being greater than a lot of stuff, a lot of significant people and institutions, and that will continue tonight. Tonight, we will see that Jesus is greater than the former priests.
Jesus is greater than the former priests. And some people have said that chapter 7 is really the focal point of this book, the center, the focus of this letter.
And if you think about it, it's at the heart of this book if you count the chapters. There are six chapters on either side. And what this chapter deals with is the priesthood of Jesus.
[1:03] What it means for him to be our priest. How long will he be our priest? What will he accomplish as our priest? And chapter 7 unpacks for us all of the riches of what it means for Christ to be a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

And we've kind of been circling around this theme for a couple of weeks now. The author got there at the end of chapter 5 that Jesus is a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.
And he interrupts himself and says, I want to say more about this. We have more to talk about here. But you're not ready for it. You become dull of hearing. You're not mature. You need me to give you milk and not solid food.
And he gives this warning that they need to grow up and continue to be faithful to Christ. And now in chapter 7 we finally get to what he's wanting to talk about. We finally get to the heart of what it means for Jesus to be a priest like Melchizedek was.
If you remember back to chapter 5, he said this topic was for the mature. This topic was for those who have laid the foundation of repentance and faith and are walking with Christ and growing in him.
[2:16] And so tonight, I want you to pay very careful attention. We always want to pay careful attention to God's word because it is God speaking to us. But tonight there will be some challenging things to understand.

Hebrews is a deep letter. There will certainly be things here that may go beyond your understanding. If you're a new believer or a young believer, if you're outside of Christ, there may be some things here tonight that you don't understand at all.
I want to try to explain them to you. And so do your best to pay attention because this is deep, deep truth here talking about the priesthood of Christ. But I also want you to remember what his point is. He's not just taking us deep into theology for fun. He's not just giving us a lecture so that we know more. He is wanting these Christians to stay faithful to Jesus for the rest of their lives.
These Hebrews were former Jews that followed Christ and are now being persecuted. And some of them are turning back to their old religion, their old way of doing things and relating to God through works and sacrifices.
[3:24] And the author wants them to continue to stay faithful. And so this will be deep, but there's a purpose. He wants us to see how great Christ is.

He wants us to be fully persuaded that Jesus is the only option for peace and righteousness. Jesus is over everything. And so tonight we'll see that Jesus is over the former priests.
And if you look at chapter 6, verse 20, it says that Jesus has become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. So he's a priest like Melchizedek was.
And in order for us to even begin to scratch the surface of what this might mean, we need to know who Melchizedek was. Who is this guy with a strange name?

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What did he do? Why is he important? And so he explains it to us in verses 1 and 2. He gives us a recap of Melchizedek's first appearance in Scripture. From Genesis 14, and the author explains in verse 1, We'll cover this text in two parts tonight.
[4:44] Number one being Melchizedek's priesthood. Melchizedek's priesthood. And so he starts by explaining who Melchizedek was. And before we go further, the author is about to explain that Melchizedek is a type of Christ.

Melchizedek is an example of Christ. And when we're dealing with types in the Bible, a type of Christ or a type of salvation, what we're really dealing with are patterns.
Patterns that are based on people or patterns that are based on events. So for example, if we think about the Exodus, we're looking at a type of salvation. It's a foreshadowing of what salvation would be.
God's people were in slavery. He redeems them through a blood sacrifice, separates them from their old slavery, and brings them into worshiping himself. That's a type of salvation, a pattern of what salvation would be in Christ.
And with Melchizedek, here we have a person who is a type of Christ. A picture of who and what Christ would be when he shows up. And so in Genesis 14, where this explanation comes from, Abraham had someone in his family named Lot.
[5:57] Lot lived in this area named Sodom and Gomorrah. Bad area, don't live in Sodom if it comes up on Zillow. Bad place. Doesn't exist anymore, but just in case.

So Lot lived there, and the kings that ruled his area were conquered. And he was taken captive far north into the Israel area.
And Abraham, his righteous family member, is like, hey, we got these guys. And so he takes like 318 of his servants and is like, hey, let's just go take over four kings.
No big deal. And they do it. And they set Lot free. They take all their stuff back. And they're coming back. And on their way back to their land, this strange, mysterious figure comes on the scene named Melchizedek.
And Abraham, without explanation, gives him a tenth of everything. And this wasn't like, hey, just keep the change, Melchizedek. They'd killed four kings.
[6:58] They'd conquered four kingdoms. And so this was a lot of money that he just gave. He gave a tenth of everything to Melchizedek. Melchizedek blesses him. And then Melchizedek disappears.

If you read the story, it's really easy to forget who Melchizedek was even. It seems like Abraham is the focal point. He's the conqueror. He's the warrior. But here we get who Melchizedek is unpacked. And he starts by explaining what his name means. So it says he is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, or the righteous king.
So this is a Hebrew name, but if you look at it, Melchizedek, the Hebrew word for king, is melek. So that's king. And then Zedek is the word for righteousness. So he is the king of righteousness.
So just translating his name, he is the righteous king. And then he is also king of Salem. That is king of peace.
[8:04] He's the king of righteousness and the king of peace. And I think even the order is significant. Righteousness equals peace with God. And where he rules is significant.

He's the king of Salem, which would later become Jerusalem. And so here we have a man who is a priest to God Most High.
And he is the king of what would later become God's chosen city. He's a priest and a king who is serving Abraham.
Who shows up on the scene and blesses Abraham. In Melchizedek, we have someone who is a king and a priest. And this is so rare.
We don't find this anywhere in history. You look at Egyptian history. There were priests who ruled over the religious area of life. And there were pharaohs who ruled over the political and governmental facets of life.
[9:07] There's a distinction in almost every single culture between the king or the ruler and the priest. And in the Bible, outside of Jesus, Melchizedek is the only example of someone serving as priest and king.

And in fact, when God gives the law to Moses, the priest was not allowed to function as king. And the king was not allowed to function as a priest. And there's a king named Uzziah who tried to enter

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the temple, tried to enter the priest's domain.
And the Lord struck him down. And so this combination wasn't even possible for much of Israelite history. And even more shocking is that Melchizedek wasn't even an Israelite.
He was a Gentile. He was not related to Abraham. He was outside even of God's covenant people at this time. He had blessed Abraham and his son that he would have one day.
And this is what we know about Melchizedek. There's a lot of things that we don't know. Where did he come from?
[10:17] Did Abraham know him before that? And the author of Hebrews takes us into this silence to show us just how significant Melchizedek actually is.

And so he starts to unpack this in verse 3, talking about Melchizedek. He is without father or mother or genealogy. Having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God, he continues a priest forever.
Okay, so verse 3 says he's without father or mother or genealogy. Now, we're not speaking exactly literally here. Melchizedek obviously had parents.
Melchizedek obviously had a lineage. But the author of Hebrews is saying, in this story, we are not told who his parents are. We are not told who his ancestors were.
And so he appears in this story as a priest and a king without a genealogy, without a father or mother. It does not mention his birth. It doesn't mention when he came into this world.
[11:22] And it does not mention his death either. And so the author of Hebrews is really saying, here is a priest who is a priest not because of who his parents were. It's almost as if he's eternal.

He doesn't have a beginning or end that's recorded in Scripture. And so the author of Hebrews is saying, this is resembling the Son of God because really his priesthood continues forever.
His priesthood doesn't have an end date because he does not die in the text of Scripture. And verse 4 says, See how great this man was, Melchizedek, to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the spoils.
And again, Abraham had just conquered four kings. So this wouldn't have been a small amount of money or stuff or whatever the details were of what he gave to Melchizedek. But why did Abraham offer him a tithe?
Why did Abraham give him a tenth of everything? Did Abraham know who he was? Did they have history between the two of them? And as we read the text, it seems like Abraham simply recognizes who Melchizedek is.
[12:37] Recognizes he is the priest of God. Recognizes that he is the king of Salem. And honors him simply by virtue of who he recognizes him to be.

And it calls Abraham the patriarch. In verse 4. This is a rare title for Abraham, but it's an honorific title. Showing that he is the source of all of God's promises to God's people.
He is the first one to receive God's covenant promise to his people, Israel. And so Abraham is really the father of all Israelites who are grafted into this promise.
And it calls him the patriarch in verse 4. In verses 5 through 10, it gets interesting here. So I just want to read a chunk of this and we'll work through it. It says, And those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment in the law to take tithes from the people, that is from their brothers, though these also are descended from Abraham.
So Levi was a great-grandson of Abraham. Abraham gave birth to Isaac. Isaac gave birth to Jacob. Jacob, one of his sons, was named Levi. And it was out of the tribe of Levi that all of the priests came.
[13:53] And so if you were going to be a priest in Israel, you had to be a Levite. And specifically, a Levite descended from Aaron. And so the author of Hebrews is saying, Now, these descendants of Levi, these priests, they receive tithes from their brothers.

They receive tithes from other Israelites. But, verse 6, This man, talking about Melchizedek, Who does not have his descent from them, Received tithes from Abraham And blessed him who had the promises.
Abraham is the one who had received promises from God. That through Abraham, God would bless the nations by providing land to his people, Providing the seed, the offspring who had crushed the serpent's head.
It was through Abraham that these blessings would come. And it is Melchizedek who blesses Abraham. In verse 7, the author says, It is beyond dispute that the inferior, that means the lesser

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one, Is blessed by the superior, the greater one.
And so the one who does the blessing is greater in status and authority Than the one who receives the blessing. And so if you can think about at school right now, Well, you're not at school right now, praise the Lord.
[15:19] But thinking about school as an example, The one who gives the grades is greater than the one who receives them. Okay? So the one who gives grades is in control, It has the authority in the relationship more so than the one who receives the grades.

And so the author of Hebrews is saying this about blessings. The one who gives blessing, the one who blesses, Is greater than the one who receives the blessing. And so what he's saying here is Melchizedek is greater than Abraham.
Melchizedek is greater than Abraham. And we're not offended by that or shocked by that. But if you're a Jew, thinking about your heritage, You would call yourself a son or daughter of Abraham. A child of promise descended from Abraham. And so for someone to look at the Old Testament and say, Hey, you remember this story where this guy just kind of pops in and out?
He is greater than Abraham was. These Israelites, these Hebrews would have struggled to believe this And to fully be convinced of this, That Melchizedek was greater than Abraham.
[16:32] Abraham just got back from conquering four kings. Abraham had received the promises of God. Abraham is the man in the ancient world. And yet he's blessed by someone who's even greater than him, Melchizedek.

In verse 8, In the one case, Going back to the Levites now, In the one case, tithes are received by mortal men. But in the other case, in the case of Melchizedek, By one of whom it is testified that he lives.
So what he's saying here is that the Levites, The sacrificial system in Israel, These tithes and offerings are received by men who will die. In this case, the tithes are received with Melchizedek by one that's testified that he lives.
His death is not recorded anywhere. And so it's as if he continues to live. And so his priesthood is greater than those who descended from Levi.
In verses 9 and 10, Okay, so this gets a little weird from our perspective.
[17:48] The author of Hebrews is saying, Levi, the great-grandson of Abraham, Basically paid tithes through Abraham, Because he was still, in some sense, in Abraham's body.

And that seems super strange to us to think like that. In the Israelite mind, This is how they thought, though. If you remember back to the Exodus, God gave the Ten Commandments through Moses to Israel.
What happened to the Israelites who received those commandments? They all died in the wilderness. And their children grew up after them to go into the Promised Land.
And Moses is re-giving the Ten Commandments to that new generation who lost their parents and grandparents in the wilderness. And in Deuteronomy 4, Moses says, Just as God spoke to you at the mountain.
And some of them weren't even there. Some of them weren't even alive at that point. But it was through their parents that they were there receiving the Word of God. And we kind of talk like this, too, a little bit.
[18:58] So I cheer for Oklahoma State. And if our basketball team is not doing well, and so I'll say we are having a bad basketball season. I'm not on the team.

I don't coach. I haven't watched a single game this year. But I say we, which may be a bad choice this year for OSU sometimes. But we identify with, you know, we identify ourselves as if we're part of the team.
Or if you think about the United States of America, you say we won two world wars. None of us were there. None of us participated in that. But we, through participation in this country, take pride in that, right?
And so we think in similar ways as well today. But think about the author of Hebrews logic here. Since Levi comes from Abraham, Abraham is greater than Levi.
Since Abraham gives tithes to Melchizedek, Melchizedek is greater than Abraham. And so what he's saying is that Melchizedek is greater than Levi.
[20:07] So Melchizedek is greater than Abraham. Abraham is greater than Levi. So Melchizedek is greater than Levi. That's the transitive property, baby. Pay attention to math class.

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It might help you read the Bible sometimes. Sometimes. Sometimes. So Melchizedek, his priesthood is greater than Levi's priesthood. Because Melchizedek himself is greater than Levi. And we think about the Old Testament priesthood, they were the ones offering sacrifices. They were the ones representing the people before God and representing God to the people.
And what the author of Hebrews is saying here is that was always inferior. That was never a superior priesthood. There's been a priesthood that has always been better than what Levi had in Israel.
And so the Old Testament priesthood was always just a temporary measure. It would always pass away. It would never be the ultimate fulfillment. It had this built-in obsolescence. It would soon fade away and be useless.
[21:12] And when you think about something being obsolete, that's typically how we describe technology. And I've got a picture here of a Blackberry. There it is.

I don't know when exactly this came out, but when it came out, or at least the first time I remember seeing one, it was like fourth or fifth grade. And it was all the rage. Do you know why?
Why? Because on one device, you could call, text, and email. Yeah, mind-blowing stuff. So it was just trend-setting.
All right, you can take the picture off. Thank you, Maddox. So that, who wants a Blackberry? Yeah, no, no one. Okay, I don't have one. That wasn't a... So that is completely obsolete now, right?
It is completely passed away. It is useless. I think they still make them. You can buy them at Walmart, probably for like 25 bucks. But that is something that's obsolete now because something better has arrived.
[22:16] Several better things have arrived. And this is how the author of Hebrews is describing the Old Testament priesthood. It was always inferior from the beginning. Melchizedek's priesthood was better.

And now there's an even better priesthood that has arrived, and the Old Testament priesthood is completely useless to us. So that's Melchizedek's priesthood in verses one through 10. Secondly, through the rest of this chapter, we see Jesus' priesthood.
Jesus' priesthood. And he starts in verse 11. Now, if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood, for under it the people received the law, what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek rather than one named after the order of Aaron?
And so what the author of Hebrews is arguing here is that the Old Testament law, the Old Testament priesthood, could never make someone perfect. It could never lead to ultimate salvation. It could never actually pay for sins fully and finally. And so you had to constantly offer sacrifices. You had to constantly appear in the temple to atone for your sins.
[23:29] And he's saying, if that priesthood, if that system made people perfect, then we never would have needed a better priest.

And Melchizedek is mentioned in one other place in the Old Testament. It's in Psalm 110. And it talks about the Messiah coming and it says, he is a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. And the author of Hebrews is saying, the Old Testament predicted that a new priest was coming. And if the Old Priesthood made people perfect, there was no reason to predict that.
There was no reason to look forward to it. Verse 12, for when there's a change in the priesthood, there's necessarily a change in the law as well.
The law and the priesthood are a package deal. And it's kind of like, if you think about today, the law that we have written and the policemen that enforce it.
[24:27] If you don't like the law and you just say, the speed limit's 55, I'm gonna go 80. You're soon gonna have an issue with the policemen, right? And so these two things are a package deal.

If you have an issue with the law and you disobey it, you're not gonna be on good terms with the policemen who enforce it. And so the law and the priesthood go together in the Old Testament similar to that.
And so if there's a change in priesthood or a change in the law, there has to be a change in the other as well. Verse 13, for the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe from which no one has ever served at the altar.
Who's the one of whom these things are spoken? Verse 14, for it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah. And in connection with that tribe, Moses said nothing about priests.

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Moses could not have foreseen the day when someone from Judah served as the priest. And so how did he become priest? Verse 15, this becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek.
[25:39] One who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life. Christ's priesthood is not based on who his parents are or are not.

His priesthood is based on his resurrection from the dead. His life is now indestructible. He has risen back from death to die nevermore. He is a priest, not because he descended from Aaron, but because he ascended from death.
He now has an indestructible life. And verse 17, for it is witnessed of him, you are a priest forever. forever after the order of Melchizedek.
And forever is a weighty word. We can't fully grasp it, but he's not exaggerating here. He's not using hyperbole here.
You know, if you guys talk to me about going to HTO and you're like, I waited in line forever. That's not how he means it here. Christ will serve as priest forever.
[26:50] He will be priest forever and ever without end. He will always serve as a priest after this order of Melchizedek because his life is indestructible.

And verse 18, for on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness. For the law made nothing perfect.
And so he's saying this Old Testament law, this Old Testament priesthood was just laid aside because it was weak and it was useless. Now when we think about the Old Testament, we don't want to say the Old Testament as a whole is weak and useless.
What is he saying here? He's saying it could not perfect. It could not make anyone pure and holy. The law was intended to show sin, to expose sin, and it did that perfectly and powerfully.
What the law could not do, what it was useless to do, was to save people. It could not save anyone. And so it was laid aside. But on the other hand, verse 19, a better hope is introduced through which we draw near to God.
[27:59] What was the hope of many Jews during this time? Their own works. Their own ability to earn favor with God.

Their own ability to be righteous enough and holy enough for God to accept them. And things haven't changed. We still believe in works-based righteousness. Everyone in the world does.
And it may take the form of someone telling you, just be true to yourself. Live out your truth. And if you do those good works, you'll attain to some form of peace and happiness.
But in Christianity, it is not based on works. We have a better hope. We can place our faith in Christ who has completed these works necessary for us to draw near to God.
It is only in Christianity that we are enabled to draw near to God. Jesus is the only one who can do this. Jesus is the only priest that can save in this way.
[29:06] Jesus is the only one that anyone here or anywhere else in the world can be saved. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

And so why would these Hebrews go back? Why would they abandon their faith in Christ? What is there to go back to? Nothing allows them to draw near to God the way this better hope does.
And this better hope is found in Christ. And Jesus' priesthood, verse 20, was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him, the Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, you are a priest forever.
Jesus' priesthood comes with an oath. If you read the Old Testament and as these men become priests, there was no promise from God that they would remain priests forever. There was no oath or swearing from God that these men would be priests forever and ever.
But with Jesus there is, the Lord has sworn and will not change his mind. Verse 22, this makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.
[30:22] A better covenant. That would have been difficult for Jews to understand. They would have looked at the promise made to Abraham as the ultimate foundation, the ultimate promise that could ever be made.

How can there be a covenant better than the one made with Abraham? And there can be a better covenant if there's a promise that saves. If there's a promise that actually brings salvation to people,

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which is what Christ does.
And it calls him a guarantor here in verse 22, and that's a confusing word, but it means that he is the promise, he is the pledge that all of God's promises will be fulfilled.
When I was newly married to Lacey, the only wife I've had, just for, that was unclear, we were signing up to get our apartment.
We lived at the Links for a while after we were married, Mustang and 15th, great location. And as we were signing the contract, it said on the contract, who is the guarantor of this contract?
[31:26] And so I put my dad's name, and what that was meaning is that if we don't pay our rent, my dad will pay it, which is dangerous. I was not planning on being slothful in paying what we owed, but my dad's name was attached to that contract.

My dad was saying, if this rent is not paid, ultimately, it'll be my responsibility. And Jesus is the guarantor of this better covenant.
Jesus is the one who guarantees that all of God's promises will be kept, that all of God's promises will be inherited by his people.
Jesus is our guarantee he will fulfill all of God's promises to his people. Verse 23, the former priests were many in number.
There was lots of them. Why? Because they were prevented by death from continuing in office.
There were tons and tons of priests in the Old Testament. There were so many because they died.
[32:33] And a dead priest cannot save. A dead priest cannot offer sacrifices for the people. Verse 24, but Jesus holds his priesthood permanently because he continues forever.

forever. And consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him since he always lives to make intercession for them.
Jesus is able to save to the uttermost. What does this mean? It means that he's able to save completely and he's able to save forever.
forever. He's able to save to the fullest extent. He doesn't just partially save his people. He doesn't just partially pay for their sins and he also doesn't just temporarily save them.
He saves fully and finally and completely and unchangeably. And so those who draw near to God through him will experience this salvation.
[33:38] He is able to save. And the former priests, I'm sure they were all good dudes, they could not, well most of them, some of them were terrible, they could not save their people.

Regardless of how badly they wanted to, regardless of how much love they had for their people, they could not actually and fully pay for their sins. They could not save their people.
but Jesus is able to save forever. Jesus is able to save to the uttermost and so Jesus does not just get us, he saves us.
He brings salvation, he brings security to those who draw near to God through him. And it's through him that's the only way someone can come to God.
And this is why we must share the gospel. This is why we must talk about Christ where we go because that is the only hope someone has of being with God.
[34:42] Jesus' priesthood never ends, his priesthood saves, and his work never comes to an end as he intercedes for his people. Jesus is greater than the former priests in every way.

Verse 26, for it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.
Because of these things, he has no need like those high priests to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.
The Old Testament priests had to offer sacrifices for their own sins before they could intercede for someone else. But Jesus, being holy and innocent and unstained and separated from sinners, does not have any sins to atone for.
He is perfect and spotless and does not need to offer sacrifices for himself. He is strictly there to serve his people. And the sacrifice he offers is not repeated, it is once for all, complete and final when he offered up himself.
[36:02] He is not only the priest, he is the sacrifice on the altar. He laid down his life on the cross, pouring out his own blood in the place of his people, suffering the wrath of God for sin that he did not commit so that he could save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him.

Jesus is not only the king and the priest, he is also the sacrifice, but now has an indestructible life through his resurrection from the dead. And verse 28 says, for the law appoints men in their

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weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath which came later than the law appoints a son who has been made perfect forever.
There is no weakness in Jesus. There is no sin in Jesus. He became a priest by the promise of God.
And that promise, that oath coming in Psalm 110 came after the Levitical priesthood had already been established and functioning. Jesus' priesthood is greater.
Our high priest has no weaknesses. He can make us perfect because he is perfect. Our priest is God's own son who is the final word from his father.
[37:27] No priest is coming after him. He is the final one. He lives forever. And this was always God's plan for his people. So if you're a believer here tonight, do not abandon Christ.

Do not stop following him. Outside of him, you have zero hope. You have zero prospects for the future. You can have zero joy now or in the future because only God's wrath awaits you.
We must hold on to Christ. And if you're here tonight and you're not a believer, you need to believe in Jesus. Stop running.
Stop trying to earn his favor. Stop trying to earn your own righteousness. Draw near to Jesus. Cry out to him for forgiveness and mercy and experience the righteousness and peace that this king and this priest and this sacrifice can bring to you.
You will not find salvation anywhere else. So I urge you to believe in him tonight. Let me pray for us and we'll go to small groups. Father, the ground we've covered tonight is dense.
[38:43] We've waded through deep waters considering who your son is as our priest. I pray that we would take it to heart and if there are things here we don't understand that we would search out the scriptures diligently and faithfully so that you would help us to understand your will for Jesus who's our priest forever who saves to the uttermost I pray that we would speak of him and tell of the good news that he has done when he offered up himself and rose again from the grave becoming the priest forever seated at your right hand and it's in his name we pray

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