

Take-Home: Session 3

A Kingdom of Priests · A Priest Forever

What We Found

We went back to the stranger. Melchizedek is king of Salem (which is Jerusalem) and "priest of God Most High," a true priest of the true God before Sinai, before Levi, before Israel. In a book obsessed with genealogy, he has none: no father, no mother, no birth, no death recorded, and the silence is deliberate. Abram, carrying the promise for the whole world, is blessed by him and tithes to him: the lesser honored the greater. Then Psalm 110 detonated: "The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." Sworn: an oath the Levitical priesthood never got. For ever: a priest who does not die and hand it on. And King Uzziah showed us this was never routine royal privilege: he grasped at priestly work and left the temple a leper. Finally, Jesus himself, teaching in the temple in the last week of his life, put this exact psalm at the center of the question of his identity. One thing stayed sealed: the bread and the wine.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Justin Martyr

In his Dialogue with Trypho, St. Justin argues in substance that Psalm 110 cannot finally rest on any merely human king, and points to Melchizedek, priest of God Most High before circumcision was given, as a sign that God's priesthood was never confined to one bloodline. (A summary of Justin's argument.)

Dialogue with Trypho

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Augustine

Expounding Psalm 110, St. Augustine teaches in substance that God's oath is the strongest possible language of promise: what God swears concerning this priest is irrevocable, and the "for ever" of verse 4 already rules out any priest who dies and is replaced. (Summary of his exposition.)

Expositions on the Psalms, Psalm 110 (109 in his numbering)

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Thomas Aquinas

St. Thomas teaches that the priesthood of the Old Law was a figure of the priesthood of Christ, in whom alone priesthood reaches its full reality. Melchizedek and Aaron are not rivals; both are sketches, in different colors, of the one Priest to come. (Summary of his teaching.)

Summa Theologiae III, q. 22

Live It This Week

- Pray Psalm 110 once a day this week, out loud. The Church prays this psalm at Sunday Evening Prayer II each week; you are joining her.

- Find one person coming out of a battle this week (an exam, a diagnosis, a brutal shift) and bless them concretely: a meal, a message, a prayer said with them.
- You may not change your sealed guess. You may grin.

Memory Verse

"The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

Psalms 110:4 (RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Hebrews 4:14 to 16, twice. Bring one honest question about what a priest is for.

Catechism References

CCC 1544; CCC 436.