

Session 8: A Priest Forever

Genesis 14:17-20; Psalm 110; Hebrews 7:1-28; Mark 14:22-24

Part One: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. The group discovers the Bible's strangest priest: before Levi, before Aaron, Melchizedek blesses Abram and brings out bread and wine; a psalm promises the Messiah a priesthood of his order for ever; Hebrews crowns Jesus with it; and at his one great offering, Jesus takes bread and wine.

Catholic Touchstone. The Church sees in the gesture of the king and priest Melchizedek, who brought out bread and wine, a prefiguring of her own offering (CCC 1333); Christ is the unique high priest after the order of Melchizedek (CCC 1544).

What You Need to Know

Every sacrifice needs a priest. The group has watched the shape of the Eucharist assemble for seven weeks: a lamb that must be eaten, covenant blood at a meal, bread from heaven, bread before the Face. Tonight the question becomes: who offers? And Scripture's answer begins long before Aaron, with three verses in Genesis and one line in a psalm that the New Testament spends three chapters unpacking.

Melchizedek appears from nowhere: king of Salem, priest of God Most High, no genealogy, no death notice. He blesses Abram after the battle, receives a tenth of everything, and, the detail our study cares about, he brought out bread and wine. Be precise here, because precision is our credibility: Genesis says he brought out bread and wine; it does not use the word sacrifice. The Church's tradition, as old as her liturgy, has read the act as a priestly offering, and the grammar invites it, since the verse explains the act by his office: he was priest of God Most High. But we will present the text as it stands and label the sacrificial reading as the Church's venerable interpretation, which is exactly what the Roman Canon does when it prays of the offering of your high priest Melchizedek.

Then Psalm 110, the psalm Jesus himself loved to quote: the Lord swears to David's lord, you are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. Hebrews takes the oath with total seriousness: a priesthood outside Levi's line, prior to it, greater than it, and permanent. And here is the discovery the group should be allowed to make with their own mouths: if the Messiah's priesthood is of Melchizedek's order and not Aaron's, then, the Church has always reasoned, his offering will bear his own order's mark and not Aaron's. Hebrews sums up Aaron's atonement offerings as the blood of bulls and goats (10:4), though Israel's worship also offered grain and wine. What did Melchizedek bring out? And what did Jesus take into his hands on the night he gave himself up?

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Genesis 14:17-20. Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. He blesses Abram, and Abram gives him a tenth of everything. The Bible's first named priest acts with bread and wine in his hands.

Psalm 110:1-4. A royal psalm of David: the Lord says to my lord, sit at my right hand; and then the oath: the Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, you are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. The Messiah will be a priest, and not a Levitical one.

Hebrews 7. The New Testament's longest sustained argument: Melchizedek, resembling the Son of God, continues a priest for ever; Levi, still in Abraham's loins, in effect paid him tithes; perfection was not through the Levitical priesthood; Jesus, of Judah not Levi, is priest by the power of an indestructible life, holding his priesthood permanently, able for all time to save those who draw near through him, since he always lives to make intercession.

Fulfillment. On the night he was betrayed, the priest for ever took bread, and then the cup, whose contents he himself calls the fruit of the vine (Mark 14:22-25). The new priesthood's offering is not another animal; Aaron's altar could multiply victims for ever and perfect no one. The offering of the order of Melchizedek is the priest himself, given under bread and wine. What Genesis whispered, the upper room performed.

Voices of the Church

St. Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258)

In summary of *Letter 63*, which the group met in Session 4: Cyprian read Melchizedek exactly as this session does. The order of Melchizedek, he wrote, is seen in the sacrament of the Lord's sacrifice: as Melchizedek, priest of God Most High, offered bread and wine and blessed Abraham, so our Lord offered the same, that is, his body and blood, and the ancient blessing comes to Abraham's true children at the altar. The third century read Genesis 14 as a Eucharistic text without embarrassment.

St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430)

In summary of his teaching in the *City of God*: Augustine marveled that in Melchizedek the sacrifice first appeared which is now offered to God by Christians throughout the whole world, so that what the psalm swore of Christ, you are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek, is fulfilled before the world's eyes at every altar. For Augustine, the global daily offering of bread and wine was itself evidence that the oath of Psalm 110 had come true.

The Roman Canon (the most ancient Eucharistic Prayer of the Roman rite)

Not a saint but a praying voice preserved in the Roman rite for well over a millennium: in Eucharistic Prayer I, immediately after the consecration, the priest asks God to accept these gifts as once he accepted the offering of your high priest Melchizedek, a holy sacrifice, a spotless victim, naming him alongside Abel and Abraham. At the very moment the Church offers the Body and Blood, she remembers the man who brought out bread and wine. The liturgy is the oldest commentary the Church has.

Catechism Connection

- CCC 1333: the Church sees in the gesture of the king and priest Melchizedek, who brought out bread and wine, a prefiguring of her own offering.
- CCC 1544: everything the Old Covenant priesthood prefigured finds its fulfillment in Christ, the one mediator, whom the Church's tradition considers, with the letter to the Hebrews, the unique high priest after the order of Melchizedek.
- CCC 1410: it is Christ himself, the eternal high priest of the New Covenant, who, acting through the ministry of the priests, offers the Eucharistic sacrifice; and it is the same Christ, really present under the species of bread and wine, who is the offering.

THREAD WATCH

The command to eat. No new eat-command tonight, but a pairing to notice quietly: bread and wine together, for the second week running, first among the golden table's vessels, now in Melchizedek's hands.

Where is the lamb? Melchizedek meets Abram in Genesis 14; Isaac's question waits eight chapters ahead in the same man's story. If anyone reaches for Moriah, honor it in a sentence and hold.

Sealed guesses. Two sessions until they open. Next week's session ends deliberately unresolved; this is the calm before it.

Session Goals

1. Meet Melchizedek in Genesis 14 and state precisely what the text says and does not say.

2. Hear Psalm 110's oath and Jesus's own use of the psalm.
3. Follow Hebrews 7's argument for a priesthood outside and above Levi's.
4. Draw the mode-of-offering inference with the group's own mouths: Melchizedek's order offers bread and wine.
5. Answer the Hebrews-silence steelman with full honesty.

A note on time. If you must cut, cut the second Win question and read Hebrews 7:1-3 and 7:23-27 rather than the whole chapter. Do not cut the precision paragraph about brought out versus offered; it is the session's honesty anchor.

Part Two: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: Father, you swore an oath and will not change your mind: your Son is a priest for ever. Bring us tonight to the altar where that oath is kept, and bless us as Abram was blessed, with bread and wine and the name of God Most High. Amen.

Win: Opening the Conversation

1. Who in your life has blessed you, in the old sense: spoken over you words that actually shaped what you became?
2. When you hear the word priest, what do you picture first, and where did that picture come from?

Build: Into the Text

Leader: Tonight we track one figure across the whole Bible: three verses in Genesis, one oath in a psalm, three chapters in Hebrews, and one night in an upper room.

3. Read Genesis 14:17-20. List everything the text tells us about Melchizedek: his titles, his actions, and what he brings. Be exact: what does verse 18 say he did with the bread and wine, and how does the verse explain the act?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

King of Salem and priest of God Most High, the first person in the Bible called a priest. He brought out bread and wine, blessed Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth, and received from Abram a tenth of everything.

Hold the group to precision: the text says he brought out bread and wine; it does not say he sacrificed them. But notice how the verse explains the act: he brought out bread and wine, and he was priest of God Most High. The office is given as the frame for the gesture. The Church's tradition, from her earliest centuries and in her most ancient Eucharistic Prayer, has read the act as a priestly offering. We hold the text and the tradition together honestly: what Genesis states is bread, wine, priesthood, and blessing, side by side.

4. Read Psalm 110:1-4. Who is speaking to whom in verse 1, and what does God swear in verse 4? Then read Mark 12:35-37: what does Jesus himself do with this psalm?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The LORD speaks to David's lord: sit at my right hand. Then the oath, sworn and irrevocable: you are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. David's greater son, the Messiah, will be a priest, and of Melchizedek's order, not Aaron's.

Jesus quotes this exact psalm about the Messiah and presses its riddle on his hearers: David calls him Lord. It is the psalm the New Testament quotes most often, and Jesus himself pressed its riddle. When we build on Psalm 110, we are standing where Jesus stood.

5. Read Hebrews 7:1-3, 11-17, and 23-27. What is Hebrews's argument for why the Messiah's priesthood outranks Levi's, and what can this priest do that Aaron's line never could?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Melchizedek precedes and outranks Levi: Abraham, with Levi in effect still in his loins, paid him tithes and received his blessing, and the inferior is blessed by the superior. Perfection did not come through the Levitical priesthood, so the psalm promises another order. Jesus, from Judah, is priest not by genealogy but by the power of an indestructible life; he holds his priesthood permanently because he continues for ever; he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make

intercession; and unlike the daily offerings of mortal priests, he did this once for all when he offered up himself.

6. Now make the inference yourselves; do not let the leader make it for you. Hebrews sums up Aaron's atonement offerings as the blood of bulls and goats (10:4). If Jesus is priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek, what mark would you expect his offering to bear? Then read Mark 14:22-25 and say what he took into his hands.

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

Melchizedek's order is marked, from its first appearance, by bread and wine and blessing. And on the night he was betrayed, the priest for ever took bread, blessed, broke, and gave: this is my body; then the cup: this is my blood of the covenant. The offering of the new priesthood is himself, and its appearance is what Melchizedek's story led the Church to expect: bread and wine (CCC 1333).

Let the group feel how the pieces close: the victim is the priest (Hebrews 7:27, he offered up himself), and the appearance matches the order's first appearance in Scripture, as the Church has read it. In that reading, Aaron's altar explains the Cross's language of blood and sacrifice; Melchizedek's table explains why the sacrifice reaches us looking like a meal.

The Other Side of the Table

Leader: Read the objection at full strength.

The Hebrews-silence reading. Hebrews is the New Testament's authorized commentary on Melchizedek, and its interests are explicit: the name, the titles, the missing genealogy, the tithes, the blessing, the for ever. It never once mentions the bread and wine. If the inspired author, arguing at full stretch for Christ's Melchizedekian priesthood, did not reach for that detail, then the detail was not the point, and the Eucharistic reading hangs on the one clause Hebrews declined to use.

7. Strengthen it: what is the best additional case that the bread and wine are incidental to Melchizedek's significance?

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

Good additions: in the Genesis narrative the bread and wine can be read as royal hospitality, provisions for Abram's weary men; Hebrews's silence is total, not partial; and the strongest typology should follow the inspired author's own emphasis.

8. Now answer honestly. Does our argument require Hebrews to have made the bread-and-wine link? Where does the datum actually come from, and who else in the tradition carried it?

ANSWER (*share after the discussion*)

Concede the silence fully: Hebrews argues from the oath and the order, not from the menu, and our case never claimed otherwise. Hebrews establishes exactly what we need it for: that Jesus is priest for ever of Melchizedek's order, and that his self-offering is once for all. The bread and wine come from Genesis itself, where they are the first thing the text tells us this priest did. A commentary using some details does not delete the others; Hebrews interprets Salem as king of peace (7:2) yet never identifies the city with Jerusalem, and no one concludes the location is meaningless.

And the reading did not wait for us. Cyprian in the third century, Augustine preaching to the world, and the Roman Canon at the altar all carried Genesis 14 to the Eucharist. The question the silence-argument cannot answer is the one the whole study keeps posing: why does the Messiah's chosen sign, on the night of his offering, happen to match the signature of the very priestly order the oath assigned him? One coincidence is a coincidence. We are now five figures deep.

Keep the claim calibrated: typology converges; it does not compel. But the convergence is doing exactly

what the Church says figures do: drawing the shape of the gift before the gift is given.

DIG DEEPER: Blessed and Tithed

Melchizedek does two things besides the bread and wine: he blesses, and he receives a tenth. Read Hebrews 7:6-10 on the blessing, and then Luke 24:50-51, the last thing Jesus does on earth: he lifted up his hands and blessed them.

Ask: the priest for ever begins his heavenly session the way Melchizedek met Abram, hands raised in blessing. What does it mean that Christian life happens under those raised hands, and that we bring him, like Abram, a portion of everything?

Send: Taking It With You

9. He always lives to make intercession for those who draw near through him. Right now, tonight, the priest for ever is praying for you. What would you want him saying to the Father on your behalf this week?

10. Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything after receiving bread, wine, and blessing. What proportion of your life does the priest who gives you himself actually receive back, honestly? What is one concrete step this month?

Live It This Week

- Pray Psalm 110 once this week, slowly, as Jesus's own psalm, and pause on verse 4 long enough to hear God swear.
- At Mass, when the priest extends his hands over the gifts, remember whose priesthood is acting through his, and silently pray: priest for ever, offer me with yourself.
- Write down one way you will imitate Melchizedek this week: bless someone out loud, by name, invoking God, and mean it.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."
Psalm 110:4

Closing Prayer

Together: Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you swore an oath and keep it at every altar: a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek. Bless us as Abram was blessed, receive what we bring, and hold us under the raised hands of your Son. Amen.

Part Three: Leader Reference Card

Passage	Used For
Genesis 14:17-20	Melchizedek: priest, blessing, tithe, bread and wine; live discovery
Psalms 110:1-4	The oath: priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek
Mark 12:35-37	Jesus's own use of Psalm 110
Hebrews 7:1-3, 11-17, 23-27	Priesthood above Levi; indestructible life; once for all
Mark 14:22-25	The priest for ever takes bread and the cup, the fruit of the vine; live discovery
Hebrews 7:6-10; Luke 24:50-51	Dig Deeper: blessing hands
Roman Canon (Supra quae)	Liturgical witness: the offering of your high priest Melchizedek
Psalms 110:4	Memory verse