

# A Faithful Advocate

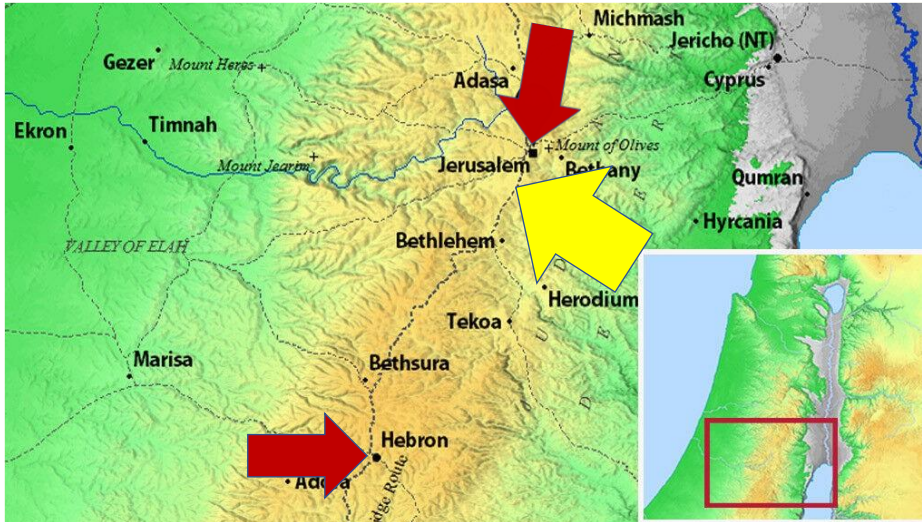
Genesis 14:17-24



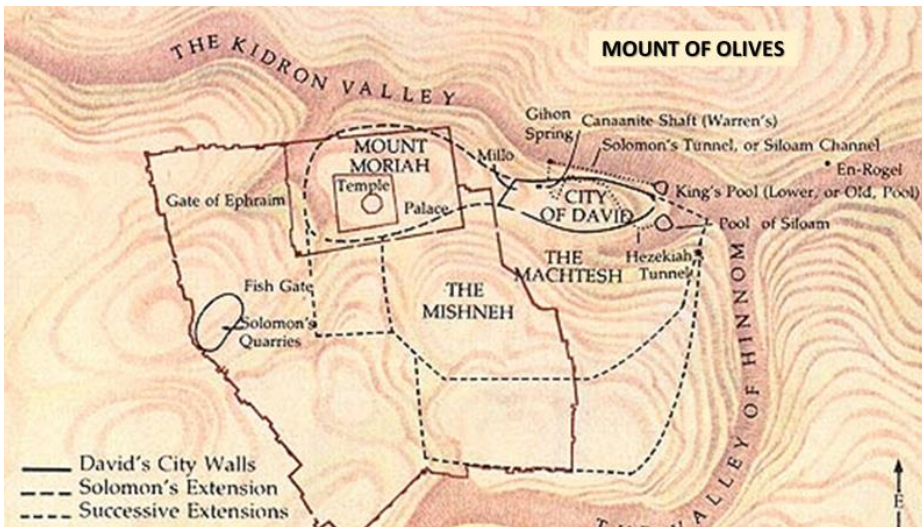
Genesis 14:17-24



As Abram returned home to Hebron, he was met by two kings. The one has already been identified and named – Bera, king of Sodom. The other was Melchizedek, king of Salem.



These two kings met Abram in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley) which in later times would be better known as the Kidron Valley, that ran between Jerusalem Gate and the Mount of Olives.



Bera, the king of Sodom, told Abram, he could keep everything he had recovered... all the possessions.

All Bera wanted was for Abram to return to him his people.

In that day and time, as a war hero, custom dictated that Abram was entitled to everything he had captured.

What that means is that this offer by Bera, was not only presumptuous, it was also arrogant.

If Abram had kept the plunder he would have become very, very, very wealthy. But following the Egypt fiasco, Abram had learned that the acquisition of wealth from rulers who didn't know and serve God Most High... was a cause for regret and trouble.

And so, he unequivocally said to Bera, **“I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the strap of a sandal.”**

Abram wisely perceived the strings that were attached to Bera's offer.

If he had kept the plunder, Bera could have made the claim that it was he who had blessed Abram, rather than God Most High.

But there was something else that influenced Abram's decision.

Look again at v.22-23

Abram had made a vow to God, the LORD Most High, the Creator of heaven and earth.

With this vow... we see Abram choosing the way of obedience to and faith in God. The fact that Abram had chosen wisely, was confirmed by the blessing spoken over him by Melchizedek... **“Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth.”**

It's here that we are given a glimpse into the heart of Abram.

He chose the blessing of God rather than the blessing of Bera.

The favor of God was of greater value to Abram than adding the combined wealth of Sodom and Gomorrah to what he already had.

Even though it would be another 2000 years until Paul wrote to the Philippian church, Abram both understood and valued **“the surpassing worth of knowing God.”** Philippians 3:8

There is common grace from God that blesses all who live on the earth.

Sunshine.

Air.

Water.

Food.

The seasons.

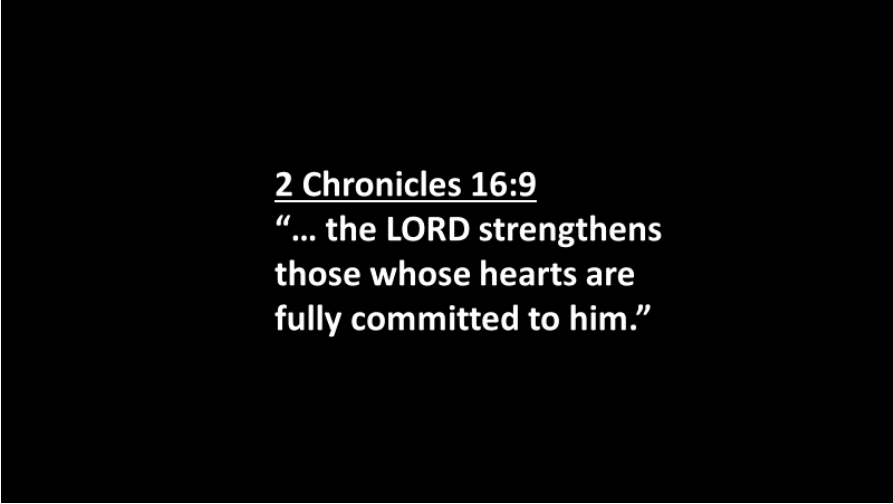
Rain.

Color.

Beauty.

Song.

But Abram experienced a particular grace from God that blesses those who respond to the LORD in obedience.



**2 Chronicles 16:9**  
**“... the LORD strengthens  
those whose hearts are  
fully committed to him.”**

As Abram aligned his life with God, and walked by faith in God, the LORD showed himself to be strong and present with Abram.

As Melchizedek said, the LORD gave Abram the victory over his enemies.

The difference between living with God and living without God is as stark as the difference between light and dark... as stark as the difference between Melchizedek and Bera.

The name Melchizedek means righteousness and the name Salem means peace.

Melchizedek was king of righteousness and peace.  
In contrast Bera was king of a city whose people had greatly corrupted themselves.  
In fact the region Bera ruled had become a moral cesspool.

Abram had experienced the goodness of God and for him, there was no going back to life without God.  
This is why Abram was so adamant in his refusal of Bera's offer.

v.17 reads as if Bera was the first to meet Abram.  
But when Melchizedek came out of Salem with bread and wine, his arrival forced Bera to the sidelines.

Was there significance to the fact that Melchizedek served Abram bread and wine.

The NT doesn't say.

And so we must be careful to not draw assumptions here.

At the very least we see the generosity of God being expressed through Melchizedek.

Through Melchizedek God spoke blessing over Abram... the blessing of obedience.

Then Abram did something surprising.

Previously, he had built an altar to the LORD at Shechem and Hebron.

In those places he had offered sacrifices on those altars to the LORD.

At both places he had called on the name of the LORD.

But outside of Salem, Abram gave a tenth of everything to Melchizedek as an offering.

This is the first time we read of an offering being a tenth.

Is there significance here in what was done? Yes.

Hebrews 7 explains the greater reality that was foreshadowed... which we will come back to shortly.

After this encounter with Abram nothing more is said about Melchizedek in the book of Genesis.

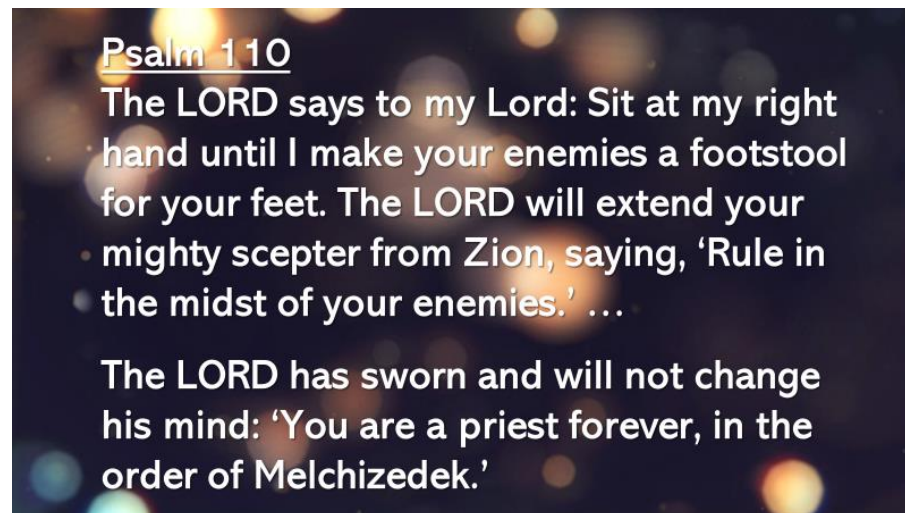


He appeared... and then he was gone.

On this basis alone... it would be easy for the reader to overlook the significance of the encounter between these two men – Abram and Melchizedek.

But the appearance of Melchizedek was a key revelation in God's great story of rescue.

Melchizedek is mentioned one other time in the OT.



Psalm 110 is known as a Messianic psalm because it reveals details of who the Messiah would be.

The LORD... who is speaking... is Yahweh.

In this psalm Yahweh spoke to David's Lord, the Messiah.

In what Yahweh said we discover that the Messiah would be a King who sits at the right hand of God.

We learn from Isaiah 9:6-7, and other prophetic passages... that the Messiah would reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, and from Isaiah 11:10, that the nations will rally to him.

Further, God made it known that for a time the Messiah would rule... in the midst of his enemies.

Psalm 110 also reveals that David's Lord, the Messiah... would be a priest in the order of Melchizedek, and not in the order of Levi.

We must not overlook what is spoken in verse 4.

Who is it that swears an oath?

It is the LORD, that is, it is Yahweh.

The oath that Yahweh swears cannot be broken or changed.

Why is that?

Because the weight of God's person stands behind the oath he makes.

God never flip-flops.

His yes is yes and his no is no.

What was the oath that is made?

That David's Lord would be a priest... from the order of Melchizedek.

Unlike the Levitical priests, of whom there were many... because of death, David's Lord would be a priest forever, meaning, he would never be replaced by another.

It was Augustine who wrote...



Melchizedek, the King of Salem and High Priest of God Most High, is only mentioned twice in the Old Testament – Genesis 14 and Psalm 110.

But who he is, and what he pointed ahead to ... God' Messiah... is gloriously unpacked in the book of Hebrews.

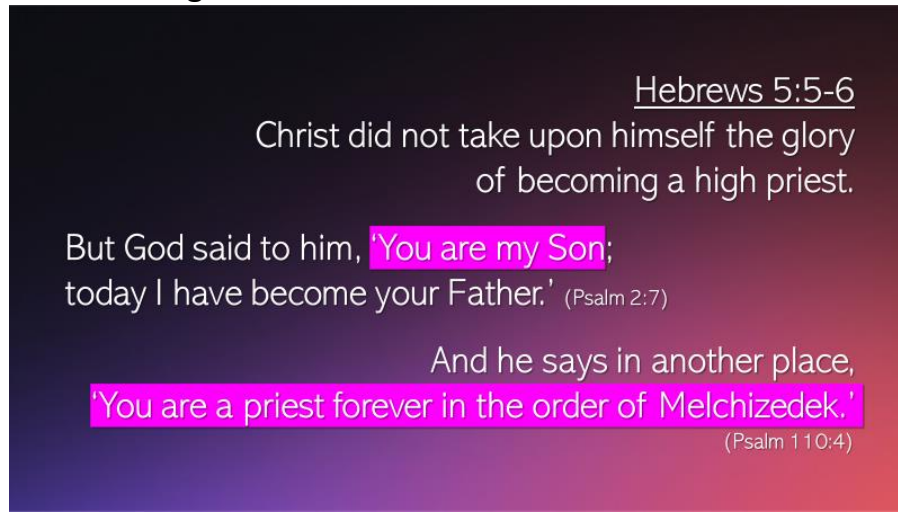
**The book of Hebrews reveals what had been concealed in the OT.**

We are ready now to look at eighteen verses in the book of Hebrews regarding the significance of Jesus being a priest in the order of Melchizedek.

Peter wrote that the Bible is like food for our souls.

He said some truths are like milk.

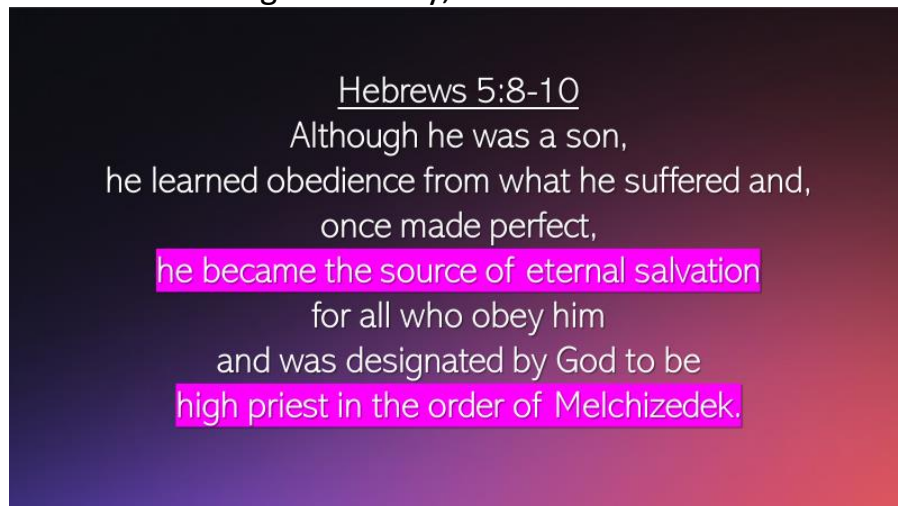
And some are like solid food.  
The teaching about Melchizedek is solid food.



God the Father appointed God the Son to become humanity's high priest.  
Why did he do this?  
Because we cannot save ourselves.

We are helpless to forge a way back to God.  
We need an Advocate.  
We need a High Priest.

In love and with great mercy, God the Father came to our rescue.



As our high priest, God the Son came into the world and lived the life we couldn't live and then offered his innocent life in sacrifice to be the source of our salvation. His salvation is not something temporary, but eternal. It saves us in this life and the life that follows death.



Hebrews 6:19-20

We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf.

He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

Our Lord Jesus, after his resurrection, bodily ascended into heaven. He is there, in heaven, as our high priest, and he is active before God to intercede on our behalf.

This is why God's people speak of Jesus as being our living hope.

Hebrews 7:11-17

If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood... why was there still need for another priest to come, one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? For when the priesthood is changed, the law must be changed also.

The OT covenant and its priesthood and sacrifices were always intended by God to serve a temporary function.

As earlier as Genesis, and before the OT covenant was even enacted, God spoke in advance of the ultimate priest who would come in the order of Melchizedek.

### **The significance of Abram giving a tenth to Melchizedek.**

Levi and his descendants upon whom the OT priesthood was founded, in Abram, acknowledged the superiority of the order of Melchizedek in the tithe given.

This act foreshadowed that their role and function would eventually be replaced by the Messiah who would offer a one-time sacrifice for sin and who would forever intercede before God on behalf of all who trust in him.

Hebrews 7:11-17

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

Jacob, as he blessed his twelve sons before he died, said this of his son Judah.

Genesis 49:10

**The scepter will not depart from Judah,  
nor the ruler's staff from between his  
feet, until he to whom it belongs shall  
come and the obedience of the nations  
shall be his.**

It was prophetically foretold through Jacob that the Rescuer would be a descendant of Judah and would be the king of all nations. But no one linked this promise, made by Jacob to the person of Melchizedek, which when put together, revealed the Messiah would be King and High Priest.

Hebrews 7:11-17

And what we have said is even clearer  
if another priest like Melchizedek appears,  
one who has become a priest  
not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry  
but on the basis of an indestructible life.

For it is declared:

'You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.'

(Psalm 110:4)

God the Son was appointed humanity's High Priest not because of his ancestry, but because of his indestructible life.

Having risen from the dead, Jesus our High Priest is the Living One... and because he is...he is forever our High Priest.

Hebrews 7:18-22

The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect) and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God. And it was not without an oath!

Others became priests without an oath, but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him, 'The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: 'You are a priest forever.' Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant.

The old covenant has been replaced by the new.

Jesus spoke of this the last night of his life.

The bread and the wine, he said, represent his body and blood, upon which the new covenant was established.

Jesus the Messiah, our High Priest... is the guarantor of a better covenant and a better hope.

What is the guarantee that the new covenant is binding for all time?

What assurance do we have that God will welcome us and pardon our sin?

How do we know Jesus will save us completely?

Our guarantor... the basis of our assurance is Jesus, our high priest and the sacrifice he made on our behalf... the sacrifice of his life blood.

The writer of Hebrews, five times identified and spoke of Jesus as being a high priest ... forever... in the order of Melchizedek.

Why does this matter so much?

Why is this truth at the core of our confidence and hope?

Look at what the writer of Hebrews said.

**Hebrews 10:19-22**

Therefore, brothers and sister, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, **let us draw near to God** with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience...

Because of Jesus, our high priest, we can draw near to God.

We can draw near because he has dealt with our sin that separated us from God.

In Jesus we are the forgiven ones.

In Jesus we are the made-alive ones.

In Jesus we are claimed, included, welcomed, adopted.

In Jesus and through him we have fellowship with God as 1 John 1:3 says.

He is the source of our joy!

We can come near to God... not on the basis of our merits, but on the basis of his, which have been credited to us by grace through faith in Christ alone.

Hebrews 10:19-22

Therefore, brothers and sister, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God...

**Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.**

What does this mean and how do we do it?

Look at what Jesus said, John 10:27-30

John 10:27-30

I give [my people] eternal life and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one.

Jesus and the Father hold us tightly.

This is the basis of the hope to which we cling to.

In Jesus we have received everything we need for life and godliness.

This is his promise to us.

Everything we need to follow Jesus until our end... is ours in Jesus Christ.

What a great salvation our high priest has obtained for us!

We need to amplify this even more.



Hebrews 2:17-18

For this reason [Jesus] had to be made [flesh and blood], fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

How does Jesus help those who are being tempted?

He intercedes with the Father on our behalf. Hebrews 7:25.

He knows exactly what to ask for, because he has lived here on the earth; he has faced everything we face.

He asks the Father that our faith might not fail, as he did for Peter.

He asks the Father to provide the way of escape when tempted as 1 Corinthians 10:13 says.

He mediates grace to us, grace from heaven... that would strengthen our resolve to say yes to God and no to sin... and to pursue a long obedience.

Jesus helps us.

He is, as Psalm 46 says an ever-present help in trouble, in testing and in temptation.

This is why we take heart today.

This is why, having gathered in the name of Jesus, courage fills our hearts.

The One who lives in us by the Spirit; the One who is at the Father's right hand, intercedes for us and he knows exactly what you need and his grace is sufficient.

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1. Hebrews 10:24 – to encourage and spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

How do we do this – encourage and spur one another on?

What does verse 25 say?

By not giving up meeting together.

As Jesus our high priest encourages and spurs us on, he would have his followers do the same with each other.

In fact, he often uses the voice of one follower to encourage another.

Jesus throughout every day is present with us.

We do so, by gathering together, consistently and regularly with God's people.

When we speak with one another, we do so to build up one another's faith,

Through his sacrifice we enter into his kingdom.

Hebrews 4:15 – he empathizes with our weaknesses and grants to us, in our time of need, mercy and grace

Hebrews 4:15 – he was tempted like us, but without sin - 5:7 – he faced death like us – 5:8 – he learned obedience through what he suffered

Hebrews 6:18-20

In Jesus we have a hope that we are to take hold of

This hope is an anchor for our soul

It reaches into the unseen realm where Jesus now is – as our high priest

According to Hebrews 7:2, the name Melchizedek means 'king of righteousness.'  
Melchizedek was king of Salem, which means 'peace.'  
Melchizedek was a king of righteousness and peace.

would the scope of what Melchizedek had foreshadowed....

was reveal the majesty of who Jesus is.

We need the both testaments of the Scriptures to understand his significance.

Genesis 14 does reveal that in Melchizedek the two offices of king and high priest were united.

Genesis 14 does reveal that Melchizedek was the king of ancient Salem.

The reader of Scriptures know this city by the name given to it much later in history – Jerusalem.

How was it that the book of Hebrews said Melchizedek didn't have a father or mother?

The book of Genesis contains many genealogies.

But that of Melchizedek is missing.

He was a real human being.

He was not a mythical character.

Just as we do not know the details of God's encounter with Abram who had been an idol worshiper, so we do not know the details of how Melchizedek became a high priest of the Most High God.

What is consistent with the character of God revealed in the Scripture is that the LORD pursues after people and calls them into relationship with him.

In the OT the priesthood of the Hebrew people was drawn from the tribe of Levi, whose great grandfather was Abraham.

Abraham

Isaac

Jacob

Levi

Interestingly enough, when Melchizedek came to Abram Levi was not enough born, nor had God revealed the details of the covenant by which he would enter into relationship with Abram's extended family.

Melchizedek was not a Levitical priest.

His priesthood came from a different order.

This is of great importance.

But David, who would unite the tribes, sat on the throne of Melchizedek, and through David the Spirit of God prophesied that the Messiah who would reign on David's throne would be a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.

The Messiah would unite the two offices, and in addition would also be a prophet, the third office among the Hebrew people.

We speak of Jesus as being our Savior, our Rescuer.

And he is... and for all eternity... he will be.

But how good is God who makes known to us, the beauty and majesty of our Rescuer in such remarkable ways.

One of those ways is through the person of Melchizedek.

In wisdom, the LORD foretold... 2000 years in advance... that the Rescuer would be a King and a High Priest.

Typically, these two roles in the OT were separate.

But Psalm 110 expressed the hope that in David's greatest descendant, the Lord, the Messiah, these two roles would be combined.

The book of Hebrews particularly lays out the uniqueness and superiority of Jesus Christ, who is God and who became human flesh and who made his home among us.

In Jesus Christ and through him, humanity is given a better revelation of God than all of the OT prophets combined.

In fact in every regard Jesus Christ is greater and better.

He is greater than the holy angels.

He is greater than Moses.

His rest of soul is greater than that of Joshua or the Sabbath.

His priesthood is greater.

The sacrifice of the innocent life of Jesus Christ is better than that of the sacrificed blood of animals.

Jesus Christ is a better King because his kingdom cannot be shaken.

In Jesus Christ there is a better hope; and a better covenant.

We cannot safely approach God who is holy.

But praise God... Jesus' one time sacrifice is sufficient for all time, and removes from those who put their hope in him... the guilt and condemnation of their sin.

Because of this our assurance is not rooted in our ability but in that of Jesus'.

He paid our sin debt in full.

He overcame the power of sin, death and the devil.

He ascended into heaven in victory.

He sits at the Father's right hand, where he speaks to the Father on our behalf.

He invites us to come near and receive from him mercy and grace... that sustains us... day in and day out.

He has committed himself to save us completely.

He has promised that he will finish in us what he has started.

Our hope is in Jesus.



It is not based on anything in this world.

Like the chain of an anchor that reaches down into the depths of the ocean floor, the anchor of our souls reaches into the throne room of God, from where Jesus rules over heaven and earth,

Our hope cannot be shaken because Jesus cannot be shaken.

Therefore, because we have such a great high priest, the writer of Hebrews urges the people of God in every generation...