

Hebrews Chapter 7

Verses 7:1-28: Using the two Old Testament references to Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18-20; Psalm 110:4), chapter 7 explains the superiority of Christ's priesthood to that of this unique High-Priest, who was a type of Christ in certain respects. Chapter 7 is the focal point of the epistle to the Hebrews because of its detailed comparison of the priesthood of Christ and the Levitical High-Priesthood.

Verses 1-3: "Melchizedek" appears only briefly in the Old Testament, yet our author minutely scrutinizes him (see Gen. 14:18-20; Psalm 110:4). "Being by interpretation": The writer sees in Melchizedek a type or figure of Christ and draws parallels between the two.

"Without father, without mother": What is true of Melchizedek typically only because of silence is intrinsically true of Christ. Melchizedek is without parents only in that they are unknown. He is "without descent" in that his genealogy has not been preserved.

Genealogy was essential to a priest, for under the Levitical system one could not serve if he could not prove his pedigree (Ezra 2:62; Neh. 7:64). Melchizedek had no papers. Further, he is without beginning and ending due to the Old Testament never mentioning his birth and death.

The author explicitly states his point when he declares that Melchizedek is "made like", or resembles, the Son of God. But has the author taken to much liberty with his typology? No, for God Himself first made the similar connection (in Psalm 110:4), "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

Some understand these verses in Hebrews to suggest that Melchizedek was a theophany, and appearance of Christ Himself, rather than a historical king at Salem. Neither Hebrews nor Genesis, however, supports that view. Even in Hebrews, such phrases as "made like unto the son of God" (verse 3), and "after the order of Melchizedek" (verse 17), indicate a clear distinction between Melchizedek and Christ.

The Genesis account provides sufficient historical data to disallow the idea that this is a temporary manifestation. This Melchizedek was a king of a literal city in Canaan. The setting (of Genesis 14), is unlike any of the settings involving a theophany. In those settings, the theophany is recognized as the Lord or is declared within the text to be the Lord (Gen. 16:7-13; 18:1-33; 22:1-14; Exodus 3:2-4).

The scripture states, "now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of his spoils." A requirement for being a priest is they had to be of human ancestry. This is one of the strongest arguments against Melchizedek being a pre-incarnate Christ.

Another strong reason for his not being Christ is that in the Old Testament theophanies, He gave his message and disappeared. He did not stay permanently to function in the office of a priest or king. Whoever this man was, he presided as the King of Salem, a historical city at that time.

When scripture compares Christ to the Melchizedek priest it states that he was "made like the Son of God" not "he is the Son of God" (Heb. 7:3b). What are stressed are some similarities about paralleled in ministry, but not in the nature of his being. Thus, in this way he was a type of Christ in his mediatorial office but he was not Christ himself.

Additionally, note this was probably not a Christophany. Reason being, when the Angel of the Lord appears there is an awe and worship. There is none in this setting of tithing and communion which we would certainly think should be if he was in fact the angel of the Lord.

Further, to argue from etymology that since the name means "king of righteousness," Melchizedek is not historical lacks substance. Both historical and archeological evidence demonstrate that the Jebusite kings of that area used compound names including "zedek" for their titles. For example, Adoni-zedek was the Zebusite king for the same city several centuries later (Joshua 10:1).

Hebrews 7:1 "For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

We have discussed this Melchizedek at length in a previous lesson. King of Salem, means King of Peace. Notice here also, that this High Priest comes from God and not through bloodline into the Levitical tribe.

The main element in all of this is that the only one He appeared to was the father of the believers, Abraham. He also, had some heavenly authority, because He blessed Abraham. Notice in the Scriptures that I will give next, what these blessings were. He is called "the" High Priest of God. Notice also, that He gave Abraham the communion elements of bread and wine.

Genesis 14:18-20 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he [was] the priest of the most high God. "And he blessed him, and said, Blessed [be] Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:" "And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all."

Notice, in this last Scripture, that Abraham recognized Him as divinely appointed High Priest sent from God, when he paid tithes to Him.

Hebrews 7:2-3 "To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;" "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually."

The Levitical priesthood was hereditary, but Melchizedek's was not. His parentage and origin are unknown because they were irrelevant to his priesthood. Contrary to some interpretations, Melchizedek did have a father and a mother.

The ancient Syriac Peshitta gives a more accurate translation of what was intended by the Greek phrase: "whose father and mother are not written in genealogies." No record existed of

Melchizedek's birth or death. This is quite a contrast to the details of Aaron's death (Num. 20:22-29).

“Like”: Literally “made to be like”; this word is used nowhere else in the New Testament. The implication is that the resemblance to Christ rests upon the way Melchizedek's history is reported in the Old Testament, not upon Melchizedek himself.

Melchizedek was not the pre-incarnate Christ, as some maintain, but was similar to Christ in that his priesthood was universal (verse 1), royal (verse 1-2; Zech. 6:13), righteous (verse 2; Psalm 72:2; Jer. 23:5; 1 Cor. 1:30), peaceful (verse 2; Psalm 72:7; Isa. 9:6; Rom. 5:1), and unending (verse 3; verses 24-25).

Verses 4-10: Even Abraham, the great patriarch of the Jewish people; considered Melchizedek enough superior that he tithed to him willingly and humbly of his spoils. So, Levi and the entire Levitical priesthood which proceeded from Abraham are inferior to Melchizedek and his priesthood.

Even though Abraham was the recipient of the covenant (and later, his descendant Moses, of the Law), he is the receiver, rather than the bestower, of the blessing. Thus, Melchizedek is his better, and is certainly superior to Abraham's offspring.

Verses 4-28: This section presents the superiority of the Melchizedekan priesthood to the Levitical. The major arguments for superiority are related to the receiving of tithes (verses 2-10), the giving of blessing (verses 1, 6, 7), the replacement of the Levitical priesthood (verses 3, 8, 16-17; 20-28).

Hebrews 7:4 "Now consider how great this man [was], unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils."

In antiquity, it was common for people to give a tithe to a god or his representative. Abraham, the father of the Hebrew faith, gave a tithe to Melchizedek. That proves that Melchizedek was superior to Abraham. The lesser person tithes to the greater (verse 7).

This alone recognized Him as High Priest of God.

Hebrews 7:5 "And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham:"

By the authority invested in them after the establishment of the Mosaic Law, the Levitical priests collected tithes from their fellow Israelites. The submission of the Israelites was not to honor the priest but to honor the law of God.

The difference in the sons of Levi and Melchizedek is that they are priest, because of their blood line and they are priest just for a short time. This Melchizedek is a Priest forever, and has no bloodline, He is divinely appointed of God for this service. The Scripture above is clearly making a difference in the type of priesthood.

Verses 6-7: Melchizedek not only received a tithe from Abraham, he also blessed him. This proves again Melchizedek's superiority.

Hebrews 7:6 "But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises."

We clearly see the distinction made here that the Levitical priesthood and the priesthood of Melchizedek are totally different. The Scripture above, again, says, He blessed Abraham.

Hebrews 7:7 "And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better."

This is just saying here, that as great a man as Abraham was, he was less than Melchizedek. Abraham is thought of as one of the best men who ever lived.

Hebrews 7:8 "And here men that die receive tithes; but there he [receiveth them], of whom it is witnessed that he liveth."

This refers to the Levitical law whose system was still active at the time ("and here"), and to the earlier historical incident recorded (in Gen. 14; "but there").

The Levitical priesthood changed as each priest died until it passed away altogether, whereas Melchizedek's priesthood is perpetual since the record about this priesthood does not record his death (verse 3).

Hebrews 7:9-10 "And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham." "For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchizedek met him."

In an argument based upon seminal headship, the writer observes that it is possible to speak of Levi paying tithes to Melchizedek. It is the same kind of argument Paul employed to demonstrate that when Adam sinned we all sinned.

This statement here, is saying that not only did Abraham pay tithes to Melchizedek, but the high priest of the Levitical tribe paid tithes to Him in reality, because he is descended from Abraham.

Verses 11-12: The author raises the question as to why the Old Testament should make reference to "another" priesthood. If the Levitical priesthood were producing "perfection", meaning

completion or fulfillment of its role, why is another needed? The old system pronounced its own doom by speaking of another.

Further, the author teaches that the passing of the Levitical priesthood necessitates the removal of the Mosaic Law, for they are inextricably united. The law did not produce the Levitical priesthood; rather the priesthood required the law. Both Moses and Aaron were chosen by God before the law was given.

The law was given at Sinai to provide the procedures and ordinances for the functioning of the priesthood God had already established. So, our author accurately acknowledges that the passing of the Levitical priesthood demands the passing of the Mosaic legal system.

Note Paul's teachings concerning the passing of the law in relation to the believer (Rom 7:1-6; 10:4; 2 Cor. 3:7-11; Gal. 3:9-25). God has not, however annihilated the law. He has removed it from the life of the believer because it can neither save nor sanctify. The unsaved man, however, still lies under its convicting and condemning work (1 Tim. 1:8-11).

Verses 7:11-28: In this section the argument is extended a step further. Since the Melchizedekan priesthood is superior to the Levitical priesthood (verses 1-10), Christ's priesthood is also superior to the Levitical priesthood, since Christ's priesthood is Melchizedekan rather than Levitical.

Hebrews 7:11 "If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need [was there] that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be called after the order of Aaron?"

"Perfection": Throughout Hebrews, the term refers to complete reconciliation with God and unhindered access to God, Salvation. The Levitical system and its priesthood could not save anyone from their sins.

Galatians 3:11 "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, [it is] evident: for, The just shall live by faith."

The law did not save, it just showed us how badly we needed a Savior. The law, then and now, shows that no man can live up to the law and all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Galatians 3:24 "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster [to bring us] unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

I want to break from the detailed explanation for a moment here and say; The Tabernacle in the wilderness was patterned after the real Tabernacle in heaven. The holy place and the most holy place that Moses had built in the wilderness was just a model of the real Holy of Holies in heaven. Moses was warned to make it in detail as the one in heaven.

The Tabernacle in the wilderness had a high priest. This leaves no doubt, that the Holy place in Heaven has a great High Priest also. We are told over and over that The High Priest forever is the One we call Jesus Christ.

Verses 12-14: Since Christ is the Christian's High-Priest and He was of the tribe of Judah, not Levi (Matt. 2:1, 6; Rev. 5:5), His priesthood is clearly beyond the law which was the authority for the Levitical priesthood (verse 11). This is proof that the Mosaic Law had been abrogated.

The Levitical system was replaced by a new Priest, offering a new sacrifice, under a New Covenant. He abrogated the law by fulfilling it (Matt. 5:17), and providing the perfection which the law could never accomplish (Matt. 5:20).

Hebrews 7:12 "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law."

Romans 8:3 "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:"

Romans 5:20 "Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:"

Abraham was saved by grace through faith just as we Christians are.

I will end this lesson on this note. God knew that man could not live up to the law, so He gave us a way of escape. That Way is Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Hebrews Chapter 7 Questions

1. What 2 things was Melchizedek called in Hebrew 7:1?
2. Where was Abraham coming from when he met Him?
3. What is the meaning of Salem?
4. What was different about His priesthood?
5. What are the 2 things we call communion elements?
6. What blessing did Melchizedek speak on Abraham?
7. Name 3 titles given Melchizedek in Hebrews 7:2.
8. What is mentioned in Hebrews 7:4 that also shows His greatness?
9. Whose sons are the earthly priesthood?

10. Who was these earthly priests' ancestor?
11. Who blesses mankind?
12. The less is blessed of the _____.
13. How did Levi pay tithes to Melchizedek?
14. The Levitical priesthood was not _____.
15. Where do we find in the Scriptures that the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ?
16. The tabernacle in the wilderness was patterned from what?
17. Who is our High Priest forever?
18. For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the ____.
19. Where sin abounded, _____ did much more abound.