

Heb. 7:1 ¶ For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; Heb. 7:2 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;

Heb. 7:3 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.

At this point the writer is going to talk a bit more about the priest Melchisedec that he first introduced in chapter 5. At that point we noted the reference to Abraham's encounter with him as recorded in Genesis 14.

The Genesis record of Melchisedec is the first reference to a priest in scripture, and I think it is significant to note that he is identified as priest of "the most high God." Abraham, in that same account, goes on to use that same phrase in reference to the LORD, YHWH.

Gen. 14:22 And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth.... It would seem that Melchisedec was widely recognized as the priest of YHWH since Abraham did not hesitate to give him tithes of all the spoil from his victory. Not only was Melchisedec a priest of YHWH, he was also the king of Salem, the early name of Jerusalem according to Strong's. This association of Jerusalem to Salem is actually affirmed by the psalmist.

Psa. 76:1-2 In Judah is God known: his name is great in Israel. In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion. The writer seems to be making connection with the title "King of righteousness" to the position of priest and his authority from God and "King of Salem" to his earthly authority as ruler of the land. According to the "Bible Names Dictionary," the word *Salem* means complete or perfect peace. It would seem that Melchisedec was a man who ruled his kingdom according to God's will and reaped the benefit of his submission to YHWH.

As we go forward, it is important to note, in my opinion, that we are told about Melchizedek as an important type of Jesus.

Verse three poses many questions. I know that Jesus is the only man identified in scripture as having been born of a virgin. I personally believe this verse to be a reference to the biblical record concerning Melchisedec. There is no record of his birth or his death; in fact, the Hebrew for *without descent* states "unregistered as to birth." As far as one can determine from the biblical record, he is still a priest. The writer compares his position as comparable to Jesus' position as the Son of God; it is eternal. According to the Jewish New Testament Commentary, this is typical of Jewish *midrash* explanation of scripture used by the rabbis and would be familiar to Jewish recipients of the letter.

Fruchtenbaum: "Insofar as the Melchizedekian Order of Priesthood was concerned, ancestry was not important....For the Levitical priesthood, genealogy was very important...."

“made like the Son of God” – This is an indirect statement regarding the superiority of the Son of the God over Melchisedec since he is compared to the Son of God and not the other way around. This comparison is in direct reference to the description immediately preceding it, “having neither beginning of days, nor end of life.” Again, this is a statement based upon the biblical record.

Heb. 7:4 Now consider how great this man *was*, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

The writer is driving home the point that this Melchisedec was a man of such authority before God that even revered Father Abraham gave him a tenth of the spoils of his victory. And I emphasize that Melchisedec is identified as a man.

Heb. 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:

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

Now the writer begins to draw a contrast. The sons of Levi, those descended from Aaron who served as priests in Israel, were authorized to receive the tithes of the people according to God’s law. The Levites are direct descendants of Abraham, but so are all the people of Israel. Melchisedec’s ancestry is not identified. Still, he received tithes from Abraham and gave him God’s blessing. In going back and forth between this section and Genesis, I just noticed that his blessing identified Abraham as “of the most High God.” He recognized Abraham as a man of faith and obedience before God. It would seem that both men were well aware of each other prior to their encounter as recorded in Genesis 14.

The writer also identifies Abraham as possessing “the promises.” This phrase is a direct reference to the covenant promises that ensure the coming eternal blessings that will be enjoyed by his descendants. Those promises are recorded in Genesis 17.

Gen. 17:4 ¶ As for me, behold, my covenant *is* with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.

Gen. 17:5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.

Gen. 17:6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

Gen. 17:7 ¶ And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

Gen. 17:8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

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

And now a very important statement to his Jewish audience—It is an accepted truth beyond dispute that the less is blessed of the better. In other words, the

biblical record establishes Melchisedec as a man of greater position and authority than Abraham since he pronounced God's blessing upon Abraham. Abraham obviously considered this to be the case since he voluntarily gave him tithes of the spoils of his victory in response to receiving blessing from Melchisedec.

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

As is often the case, I don't think I've ever really processed this verse before. The writer is making the point that the men who serve as part of the Levitical priesthood eventually die. In the case of Melchisedec, however, as far as the biblical record is concerned, he is still alive. This is actually true of every person that dies possessing faith in the LORD, they are still alive!

Heb. 7:9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham.

Heb. 7:10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.

The writer now goes on to reason that the sons of Levi, who receive the tithes from the Jewish people, also paid tithes to Melchisedec through Abraham since they descended from the seed in Abraham's loins.

Heb. 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 Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?

Now the writer begins to clarify the contrast in the two types of priestly orders. He poses a question to get the people to think. If the Levitical priesthood could have accomplished all of God's purposes through the law, why was there the need for another priest to be appointed "after the order of Melchisedec?" Why could not another descendant of Aaron have performed according to God's purpose?

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

Since the priesthood as descending from Aaron was established by God's law as revealed to Moses, a change in the priesthood dictates there must be a change in the law based on a new covenant. We noted in chapter 5 that the Psalmist had spoken of God's plan to reinstate the priestly order of Melchisedec.

Psa. 110:4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Heb. 7:13 For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.

Heb. 7:14 For *it is* evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

The writer now continues to make application to Jesus, "our Lord," as the man appointed to serve in the reinstated order of Melchisedec as declared in chapter 5.

Heb. 5:5-6 So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.

As he saith also in another *place*, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

It was well known that Jesus was a descendant of the tribe of Judah, not Levi. No one from the tribe of Judah had served in the priesthood in Israel. Moses never gave any instruction that allowed someone from Judah to serve as a priest.

Heb. 7:15 And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest,

Heb. 7:16 Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

Heb. 7:17 For he testifieth, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

I think the wording of the NLT is easier to understand.

The change in God's law is even more evident from the fact that a different priest, who is like Melchizedek, has now come. He became a priest, not by meeting the old requirement of belonging to the tribe of Levi, but by the power of a life that cannot be destroyed. And the psalmist pointed this out when he said of Christ, "You are a priest forever in the line of Melchizedek."

The writer is careful to emphasize that it is through the power of resurrection to eternal life that is the significant qualifying factor that positions Jesus to serve as a priest in the order of Melchisedec.

Heb. 7:18 For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.

Heb. 7:19 For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope *did*; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

According to the Greek, the law concerning the priesthood was cancelled or annulled because it was weak and impotent in comparison to the new hope (confident expectation) that we have in Christ that allows the believer to personally draw near to God. The law only provided temporary cleansing from sin. Through the shed blood of Christ, the believer is imputed the very righteousness of Christ Jesus; through Jesus we are presented as perfect and righteous before the Father.

2Cor. 5:17 Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

2Cor. 5:21 For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Heb. 7:20 And inasmuch as not without an oath *he was made priest*:

Heb. 7:21 (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:)

Heb. 7:22 By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

In these verses the writer is drawing a contrast to the method God employed in establishing the Levitical priesthood to Christ's appointment as priest after the order of Melchisedec. The Levitical priesthood was established through God's revelation to Moses and the priests were anointed with special ceremony and

ritual. Jesus Christ was appointed to His position with an oath from God. When God uses an oath, He is giving sacred affirmation to His action. This seems to be a redundancy to me, but He is using man's own method to drive home the truth of what He is saying. Even the phrase "will not repent" is intended to emphasize the truth of what is being said; God is not going to have second thoughts about this appointment; it is eternal. Because Jesus will remain a Priest forever, He can with complete authority guarantee a better covenant. In other words, the New Testament of grace established by Jesus fulfills and supersedes the Old Testament of the law.

Heb. 7:23 And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:

Heb. 7:24 But this *man*, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

The Levitical priesthood was administered by a succession of men as necessitated by death. Jesus, however, by His resurrection to eternal life ensures that He will serve as priest forever; He will never be replaced.

Heb. 7:25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

It is the fact that Jesus will be our High Priest forever that positions Him to guarantee the salvation of those that come to God through faith in Him. He "ever lives" to intercede for us.

"to the uttermost" – Fruchtenbaum: "...to be saved completely and to be saved forever."

Heb. 7:26 For such an high priest became us, *who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;*

Heb. 7:27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

It is this type of high priest that suits us and meets our need. One who is:

- Holy - pure
- Harmless - innocent
- Undefiled – ceremonially clean
- Separate from sinners – places Him in a position distinct from sinners; not one of them
- Made higher than the heavens – Possessing the most esteemed character
- Does not need to offer up daily sacrifice for his own sins – because He is sinless

It was His character, His total purity and sinlessness that qualified Him as the sacrifice acceptable to God to redeem man from sin. That sacrifice was a "once for all" act of obedience to the Father.

That is a hard truth to process. There have been so many people with so many sins, yet His sacrifice is sufficient for all who will accept it in faith.

Heb. 7:28 For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

Under the law the men who served as high priests were sinful men, just like all the rest of us. They were infirm or weak; they had no power within themselves to provide for the people.

“since the law” – This makes reference to a time that is after the law. Through God’s oath the Son, Jesus, has been consecrated in His position as our High Priest forever. Jesus is not infirm; He does possess the power and authority to provide forgiveness for sin. He actually imputes His own righteousness to every true believer.