

The High Priesthood of Jesus Christ

Hebrews 7:1-10

Hebrews 7:1-10 - *“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,² to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated “king of righteousness,” and then also king of Salem, meaning “king of peace,”³ without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.*

⁴ Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. ⁵ And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham;⁶ but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. ⁷ Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better. ⁸ Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. ⁹ Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, ¹⁰ for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.”

Background Notes

The central theme of the epistle to the Hebrews is “The Priesthood of Christ.” In chapter 5, the author interrupted this subject to write a third warning to the Hebrews. The third of the five warning passages began in Hebrews 5:11 and continued on through chapter 6.

In chapter 7 the author returned to the great theme of the Priesthood of Christ. In chapter 5, the author had showed how Christ is qualified to be a High Priest. He is both God and Man, and thus a perfect High Priest. What better Mediator between God and man could we ever need than the God/Man, the Lord Jesus Christ?

Chapter 7 revealed that Christ’s priesthood is superior to the Aaronic priesthood of the Old Testament. Under Old Testament Law, God directed that the priests were to come exclusively from the tribe of Levi, and the line of Aaron.

But Jesus was descended from the tribe of Judah! This would obviously raise questions in the mind of the Jewish people to whom this letter was written. So the author showed that Christ’s Priesthood is of a different order than the priesthood of Aaron. In fact, it is superior to the Aaronic priesthood, because it is a **universal Priesthood**. It’s not just for the Jews, as was the Old Testament priesthood. Jesus Christ is a Priest for both Jews and Gentiles alike. And that’s where the importance of Melchizedek comes in.

Who was Melchizedek? We first read of Melchizedek in Genesis 14. Do you remember the occasion? Along with the rest of the people of Sodom, Abraham's nephew Lot and his family had been taken captive by an invading force from Mesopotamia. But Abraham and his small army of servants went out and rescued Lot and the other captives.

As Abram was returning home, Melchizedek, a priest of the Most High God, met him along the way and encouraged him. Genesis 14:18-20, *"Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tithe of all.*

The author of Hebrews drew on this account in demonstrating that Christ's priesthood is superior to Aaron's priesthood – a priesthood served Israel under the Mosaic Law.

Doctrinal Points

1. Melchizedek's priesthood is a "type" of Christ's priesthood.

An Old Testament "type" is a person, place, event, or other item that pictures or prefigures, or foreshadows, or illustrates New Testament truth. We know for sure that Melchizedek was a "type" of Christ because of what we read in Psalm 110, a Messianic psalm. Speaking of Christ, verse 4 says: *"The Lord has sworn and will not relent: You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.*

In Hebrews 7, the author pointed out four ways in which Melchizedek prefigured, or foreshadowed, or was a "type" of Christ.

a. Melchizedek was a priest of the Most High God (v1).

As Melchizedek was a priest of the Most High God, so Christ is Priest of the Most High God.

b. Melchizedek was a king as well as a priest (v1-2).

"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, to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated "king of righteousness," and then also king of Salem, meaning "king of peace."

Melchizedek was not only a priest - he was also the king of Salem. Salem was the ancient name for Jerusalem. His name, Melchizedek, means **"king of righteousness"** and king of Salem means **"king of peace."** What a picture of Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ is King as well as High Priest. He is the King of Righteousness and the King of Peace.

c. Melchizedek was not in the priestly line of Aaron (v3).

"...without father, without mother, without genealogy."

Melchizedek was a priest of the Most High God, but he was not in Aaron's lineage because Melchizedek lived before Aaron's time. Obviously, therefore, he did not have a mother or father or genealogy in the line of Aaron. In

the same way, our Lord's lineage was not from the line of Aaron. Jesus Christ was not descended from the priestly line of Aaron.

d. Melchizedek had neither "beginning of days" or "end of life" (v3).

"...having neither beginning of days nor end of life."

Does that mean that Melchizedek wasn't a real person? No, that's not what it means! Melchizedek was a real person. He was the king of ancient Jerusalem, but he appears on the pages of Scripture with no record of his birth or death. He just appeared (Genesis 14).

So in that way, Melchizedek is typical of our Lord's eternal priesthood. That's what the end of verse 3 means: *"...but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually."* Melchizedek's priesthood is typical of Christ's priesthood.

2. Melchizedek's priesthood is superior to Aaron's priesthood.

In verses 4-7, the author of Hebrews showed that being a priest after the order of Melchizedek is superior to being a priest after the order of Aaron. He presented four ways in which Melchizedek's priesthood is superior to Aaron's priesthood.

a. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek (v4-6).

"Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham; but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises."

Under the Law, the people of Israel paid tithes for the support the priests and the Levites. But Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, and Aaron and the priests and all of the Levites descended from Abraham. So in that sense, Melchizedek's priesthood was certainly greater than Aaron's priesthood, because Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek - not the other way around.

b. Melchizedek blessed Abraham (v6-7).

Melchizedek *"blessed Abraham who had the promises. Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better."* The argument is obvious. Melchizedek blessed Abraham - not the other way around. The greater always blessed the lesser.

c. The Levites were mortal men (v8).

"Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives." The Levites and priests of the Aaronic order were mortal men. They were born and they died. But Melchizedek came onto the pages of Scripture without being born and without dying. Thus in that sense, Melchizedek "continues to live" – as a type of Christ, he remains a priest continually (v3). In that way, his priesthood is greater than the priesthood of Aaron.

d. The Levites paid tithes to Melchizedek (v9-10).

“Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.”

As a descendant of Abraham, Levi was technically “in the loins of Abraham” at the time when Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek. This means that, in that sense, “Levi” paid a tithe to Melchizedek.

That may seem like a far out argument - but it’s really a sound argument! In fact, it is scientifically correct.

Genetically speaking, as Levi and the priesthood descended from the “seed” of Abraham, Levi was in “Abraham’s loins.” So that in that way, Levi and the Aaronic priesthood paid tithes to Melchizedek.

So with these four points the author demonstrated that Melchizedek’s priesthood is superior to Aaron’s priesthood. And since Christ’s priesthood is “*according to the order of Melchizedek,*” then Christ as High Priest is superior to Aaron as high priest.

Practical Application

Are you at least tithing?

Tithing was very significant to the author’s argument here in Hebrews 7. But is tithing a valid principle for the present day? Some Christians say that tithing was a principle only under the Mosaic Law, and since the Old Testament Law ended with the coming of Christ, tithing is not a biblical principle for today.

Wait a minute! ***The principle of tithing came before the Law!*** Abraham lived before Moses. The principle of tithing came before the giving of the Old Testament Law. Furthermore, in Genesis 28 Jacob promised to give a tenth to the Lord. So ***tithing is a biblical principle.***

However, it’s true that Christians are *not required* to tithe. The New Testament teaches that Christians are to ***give proportionally*** – in keeping with our income - as the Lord has prospered us (1 Corinthians 16:2). Unfortunately, some Christians use the idea that tithing has come to an end as a “cop out” - and as a result they give only small “token” amounts to the Lord.

Although Christians are not *required* to tithe, we should be giving ***at least*** the tenth of our income to the Lord’s work – it’s a biblical principle! We should be giving in a proper proportion to how the Lord has prospered and blessed us. And just think of how greatly the Lord has prospered us compared to so many people in this world! And remember how much we owe to the Lord for all the spiritual blessings He has provided for us!

So - if we’re going to follow biblical principles (and we should!) - when we look at our checkbooks, we should make sure that we are giving ***at least a tenth!*** Sit down and calculate. ***Are you at least tithing?***