

Hebrews

Jesus, A High Priest After the Order of Melchizedek

Hebrews 7:1-10

INTRODUCTION:

Hebrews 10:32-34 (NASB95)

Hebrews 7:1-10 (NASB95)

Genesis 14:18-20 (NASB95)

Psalm 110:4 (NASB95)

Psalm 76:1-2 (NASB95)

I. Melchizedek is a Type of Christ in the Greatness of his Person.

A. Melchizedek was both a king and a priest.

Hebrews 7:1-2 (NASB95)

B. Melchizedek was a universal priest.

C. Melchizedek was a king of righteousness and peace.

1 Peter 1:18-19 (NASB95)

Ephesians 2:14-16 (NASB95)

Romans 5:1 (NASB95)

II. Melchizedek is a Type of Christ in His Image and Duration as Priest.

A. The image of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 7:3 (NASB95)

B. The duration of Melchizedek's priesthood.

Hebrews 7:23-24 (NASB95)

III. Melchizedek is a Type of Christ in the Supremacy of his Priesthood.

Hebrews 7:4 (NASB95)

Hebrews 7:5 (NASB95)

Romans 5:12 (NASB95)

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 (NASB95)

Romans 12:6-8 (NASB95)

IV. Melchizedek is a Type of Christ in the Blessings of his priesthood.

Hebrews 7:6-7 (NASB95)

Hebrews 7:8-10 (NASB95)

2 Corinthians 1:20 (NASB95)

CONCLUSION:

Matthew 16:13-17 (NASB95)

Philippians 3:7-11 (NASB95)

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INTRODUCTION:

This sermon is rated MC for Mature Christians.

To understand the importance of this chapter to the recipients of this letter, we need to understand what these Jewish Christians were going through. They were being tempted to abandon their Christian faith and return to Judaism under the threat of persecution. Some of them had lost their property and had suffered public rebuke on account of their faith. How do we know this?

Hebrews 10:32-34 (NASB95)

³² But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, ³³ partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. ³⁴ For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

Some of the Jewish Christians were thinking, “Hey, we didn’t have it so bad as Jews! The Jewish religion was a good system. It spelled out how we should live. The rituals were familiar and satisfying. It was the faith of our forefathers for many centuries. Maybe we should just go back to the way things were.”

To understand the pull of the past, we need to realize that religious traditions die hard! For hundreds of years, generations have lived and died without questioning their religious traditions. These false religious views dominate their whole way of life. When missionaries try to penetrate these cultures with the gospel, they are met with strong resistance, because to accept the gospel would mean abandoning centuries of religious tradition.

The author of Hebrews was trying to convince people that a religious system of sacrifices, rituals, and rules that had been in place for over 1,400 years had now been replaced by a better way. He focuses on the supremacy of Jesus Christ, who is the fulfillment of all that was written by Moses and the Jewish prophets. He introduces a theme that is only portrayed in the Book of Hebrews, that Jesus Christ is our king and high priest.

We will only appreciate our need for a high priest to the degree that we realize how holy and unapproachable God was under the Old Covenant and how sinful and defiled we are. As Israel was wandering in the wilderness they had seen Moses go up on the mountain into the cloud, with lightning and thunder and a loud trumpet sound, and they were terrified. If the people got too close to the mountain, they were to be put to death. The Jews knew that they could not wander into the Holy of Holies to chat with God! Only the

high priest could enter there, and then only once a year, with blood. The Jewish people knew how desperately they needed a high priest if they were to approach God.

The author of Hebrews is making the point that Jesus is our high priest. But He is not just the fulfillment of the Levitical priesthood. Their priesthood was designed to point ahead to Jesus Christ, who eternally fulfilled it and superseded it by also being an eternal King. Christ is a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. To go back to the old way would be to abandon God's only way of entrance into His holy presence because God was no longer behind the curtain to the Holy of Holies. That veil had torn from top to bottom when Jesus died on the cross giving us direct access to God through Jesus Christ. To return to the old law would be turning away from the only One who can save us from our sins and go back to an old covenant that had been replaced. So the author here is saying, you need to know about Melchizedek because he is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you desperately need to know about Christ.

The author is picking up where he left off by saying that some people had become dull of hearing. Now he wants them to understand Melchizedek so that they can gain a deeper understanding of Jesus Christ. But Christ does not reveal Himself to those who are spiritually lazy or apathetic. Have you ever considered why Jesus did not do the Transfiguration in front of the multitudes? In fact, He did not even do it in front of the twelve. He only took Peter, James, and John with Him to witness this astounding event!

Jesus concealed His glory and spoke in parables to the multitudes because they were spiritually dull. He only reveals His glory to those with whom He is intimate, and He is only intimate with those whose hearts are humbled before Him. And so as we approach these truths about Melchizedek as a type of Christ, we must make sure that our hearts are right before God and that we do not allow ourselves to be dull of hearing.

All Stand and Read Scripture

Hebrews 7:1-10 (NASB95)

⁷ For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, ² to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all *the spoils*, was first of all, by the translation of *his name*, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is 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, he remains a priest perpetually.

⁴ Now observe how great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the choicest spoils. ⁵ And those indeed of the sons of Levi who receive the priest's office have commandment in the Law to collect a tenth from the people, that is, from their brethren, although these are descended from Abraham. ⁶ But the one whose genealogy is not traced from them collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises. ⁷ But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater. ⁸ In this case mortal men receive tithes, but in that case one *receives them*, of whom it is witnessed that he lives on. ⁹ And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, ¹⁰ for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

Prayer

Everything we know about Melchizedek comes from three passages of scripture.

Genesis 14:18-20 (NASB95)

¹⁸ And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High. ¹⁹ He blessed him and said, “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; ²⁰ And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.” He gave him a tenth of all.

Psalm 110:4 (NASB95)

⁴ The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, “You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.”

The text in Genesis is historical. The text in the Psalm is prophetic, and passage in Hebrews 7 is theological. Melchizedek was the king of Salem and priest of the Most High God.

Salem was probably Jerusalem.

Psalm 76:1-2 (NASB95)

⁷⁶ God is known in Judah; His name is great in Israel. ² His tabernacle is in Salem; His dwelling place also is in Zion.

Abraham had gone after four kings that had taken his nephew Lot and his family captive when they raided Sodom, where Lot was living. Abraham defeated these kings with only 318 of his men and recovered all of the goods, and brought back Lot and also the women and the people. As Abraham returned from this battle, Melchizedek came out to meet him. He blessed Abraham and Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth of his spoils.

Out of what that short account says and does not say, the author of Hebrews draws some amazing parallels between Melchizedek and Christ. It is interesting that he omits what seems to be an obvious parallel, that Melchizedek met Abraham with bread and wine! You would think, “That is clearly a type of Christ giving bread and wine to the disciples!” In the original story, Melchizedek was bringing refreshment to Abraham and his weary men. But for some reason, the author of Hebrews passes over the easy parallel and focuses on some things that most of us would have missed.

I. Melchizedek is a Type of Christ in the Greatness of his Person.

A. Melchizedek was both a king and a priest.

Hebrews 7:1-2 (NASB95)

⁷ For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, ² to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all *the spoils*, was first of all, by the translation of *his name*, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace.

The first thing to note is that Melchizedek was both a king and a priest in the same person, which was not allowed in Israel. You may be a king or you may be a priest, but you could not be both at once. This shows that God can raise up a godly witness for Himself when and where He pleases. Like Melchizedek, Jesus is both king and priest in one person.

B. Melchizedek was a universal priest.

All of the priests who came from Aaron referred to God as Jehovah. Meaning that they were only priests to the Jews. But notice that it does not say that Melchizedek was the priest of Jehovah; it says he was the priest of – what? – "**the Most High God**". That is a universal name for God that includes both Jews and Gentiles. It is a much broader name than the Jewish term Jehovah. Like Melchizedek, Jesus came to seek the lost. There is no longer a distinction between Jews and Gentiles.

C. Melchizedek was a king of righteousness and peace.

The author makes the point that the translation of the name Melchizedek means king of righteousness and then also king of peace. In Hebrew, "**Melchi**" means "my king," and "**zedek**" means "righteousness." He was a righteous king. **Salem** is related to "**shalom**", which means peace. The order is significant: righteousness comes before peace. A king cannot have true peace in his kingdom unless both he and his kingdom are righteous. Sin brings discord and strife. Righteousness is the foundation for peace.

Jesus not only imputes and imparts righteousness to others; He is righteous in His very being. He never sinned, nor could any guilt be found in Him. He is the Lamb of God, unblemished and spotless.

1 Peter 1:18-19 (NASB95)

¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood of Christ*.

Jesus is also the king of peace.

Ephesians 2:14-16 (NASB95)

¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into one* and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, ¹⁵ by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances*, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus establishing peace*, ¹⁶ and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

Jesus brings peace between sinners and God, and peace among all that live under His lordship.

Romans 5:1 (NASB95)

⁵ Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

If you know Jesus Christ as your King of righteousness and peace, you will be growing in righteous behavior and you will be pursuing peace with others. You will be growing in conformity to your King.

II. Melchizedek is a Type of Christ in His Image and Duration as Priest.

A. The image of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 7:3 (NASB95)

³ Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually.

Being a priest in Israel was totally dependent on your family lineage. All priests came from the tribe of Levi. No one else need apply. If you could not establish your family heritage, you were excluded from the priesthood. But Melchizedek was “Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life”. Yet he was “priest of the Most High God”.

A few have interpreted Melchizedek’s lack of genealogy and the next phrase, that he had “neither beginning of days nor end of life,” to mean that he was superhuman. Some suggest that he was an angel. But Heb. 5:1 says “Every high priest is taken from among men.” Therefore, he could not be an angel. Others suggest that he is a preincarnate Jesus Christ. However, it says in verse 3 that he was, “made like the Son of God”. It does not say He **was** the Son of God. There is a difference between being like something and being that thing. Thus I believe Melchizedek is neither angel or Christ, but He is a type of Christ, a man whom God designs to use as a picture of Jesus Christ.

B. The duration of Melchizedek's priesthood.

The author of Hebrews is building an argument from the strange silence of Genesis. Genesis continuously emphasizes genealogies and the number of years that the patriarchs lived. In the midst of this emphasis, seemingly out of nowhere, comes this man Melchizedek. His family lineage is never mentioned, nor does Genesis say anything about the length of his life or his death. The author is suggesting that the Holy Spirit deliberately omitted these facts from a book that emphasizes such, in order to make Melchizedek an appropriate type of Jesus Christ. That is why he says that Melchizedek was “made like the Son of God”. It is not that Melchizedek never died, but because of the purposeful omission of his beginning and end, he “remains a priest perpetually.”

Jesus’ human lineage is given in Scripture, but He did not come from the priestly tribe of Levi, but from Judah. To be our high priest forever, Jesus had to be of a different priestly order, namely, that of Melchizedek. As the Son of God, Jesus has no human lineage, and thus fulfills the type of Melchizedek as reported in Genesis. Also, the Levitical priests died and had to be replaced, but the priesthood of Jesus is eternal.

Hebrews 7:23-24 (NASB95)

²³ The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, ²⁴ but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently.

III. Melchizedek is a Type of Christ in the Supremacy of his Priesthood.

Hebrews 7:4 (NASB95)

⁴ Now observe how great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the choicest spoils.

Melchizedek was greater than both Abraham, since he received tithes from him. Abraham spontaneously recognized that this man represented the Most High God, and so he gave him a tenth of his choicest spoils as an act of worship and gratitude toward God for granting him victory over the four kings.

Hebrews 7:5 (NASB95)

⁵ And those indeed of the sons of Levi who receive the priest's office have commandment in the Law to collect a tenth from the people, that is, from their brethren, although these are descended from Abraham.

Levi, who was Abraham's great-grandson, gave tithes to Melchizedek through Abraham's tithes, in that he was a great-grandson that was still to be born when this took place. In Hebrew thought, an ancestor contained in him all of his descendants. Thus Paul argues that when Adam sinned, the entire human race sinned.

Romans 5:12 (NASB95)

¹² Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—

So here, the author says, so to speak, that as a descendant of Abraham, even Levi, who received tithes, also paid tithes to Melchizedek.

However, the New Testament epistles never command believers to tithe, even when addressed to Gentile congregations that would have needed such instruction. The New Testament principle is that God owns everything that we are and have, and that we are to give as He has prospered us.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 (NASB95)

⁶ Now this *I say*, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each one *must do* just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed;

We are stewards of His resources, and we will give an account of how we have used them to further His kingdom.

Romans 12:6-8 (NASB95)

⁶ Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *each of us is to exercise them accordingly*: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; ⁷ if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; **he who gives, with liberality**; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

The point of the typology between Melchizedek and the Son of God is that since Melchizedek, in receiving tithes from Abraham and Levi, was greater than these great men, Jesus is greater still. As our High Priest, He is worthy not just of a tithe, but of all that we are and have, because He bought us with His blood. No gifts that we give can compare with His matchless worth!

IV. Melchizedek is a Type of Christ in the Blessings of His Priesthood.

Hebrews 7:6-7 (NASB95)

⁶ But the one whose genealogy is not traced from them collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises. ⁷ But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater.

Abraham learned from God that, through him and all of his descendants, all of the world was to be blessed. It was an awesome promise, especially because it was made before Abraham had any descendants and when it seemed impossible that he ever would.

We do not know how much Abraham knew about Melchizedek or how much Melchizedek knew about Abraham. Yet, just as Abraham knew that he should tithe to Melchizedek, Melchizedek knew he should bless Abraham. The one imparting the blessing is conveying God's blessing through His authority onto the one being blessed. Since Melchizedek pronounced God's blessing on Abraham, he is greater than this great man who had God's promises!

Hebrews 7:8-10 (NASB95)

⁸ In this case mortal men receive tithes, but in that case one *receives them*, of whom it is witnessed that he lives on. ⁹ And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, ¹⁰ for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

Melchizedek is only a type of the one who is greater still, the Lord Jesus Christ. So, if Melchizedek, who was a sign and shadow to the Messiah to come, is greater than Abraham and all of the Levitical priests to follow, how much more then is Jesus Christ greater than Melchizedek! That is because Jesus is the reality of Melchizedek's signs and shadows. Thus it follows that if a type of Christ (Melchizedek) is greater than Abraham who was given the promises by God, how much more, then is Christ greater than Abraham!

If Melchizedek could bless Abraham, how much more will the Son of God be able to bless those who draw near to God through Him! If we want to receive all of the blessings from God's promises, we should seek for them through Christ, our great king and high priest!

2 Corinthians 1:20 (NASB95)

²⁰ For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.

What do you need from God? Eternal life? Yes! Forgiveness of sins? Yes! Inner peace? Yes! Hope? Yes! Joy in the midst of trials? Yes! Grace to endure? Yes! Victory over sin? Yes! Healing from past wounds? Yes!

Jesus is the perfect high priest who dispenses God's blessings to those who have His promises. You must draw near to Him!

CONCLUSION:

I would like to finish with two concluding applications:

First, what you believe about Jesus Christ makes a huge difference! The Hebrews were in danger of falling away from the faith because they did not grasp how great Melchizedek is and therefore they did not grasp how much greater the One whom Melchizedek prefigured is.

The most important question in the world is the one Jesus submitted to the twelve disciples.

Matthew 16:13-17 (NASB95)

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴ And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." ¹⁵ He *said to them, "**But who do you say that I am?**" ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

Your eternal destiny hinges on your response to that question. If you correctly say from your heart by faith, "Jesus Christ is the Son of God who gave Himself on the cross as the only sacrifice for my sins," you have eternal life! If you diminish Jesus to a lesser role, such as, "He is a great moral example or teacher," then you will not have the high priest that you need when you stand before God for judgment. Any teaching that diminishes the supremacy of Jesus Christ is false teaching!

Second, seek God continually and fervently in His Word to give you a greater knowledge of the beauty and glory of Jesus Christ.

Listen to Paul's lifelong quest as a believer.

Philippians 3:7-11 (NASB95)

⁷ But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, ⁹ and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; ¹¹ in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

So why do you need to know about Melchizedek? Because he is **the** one gateway that the Holy Spirit has provided to tell you about the complete supremacy of Christ. He is our one and only great king and high priest. **He who has ears to hear, let him hear!**

Oh, how we tend to take our opportunity for salvation so lightly! We let life get in the way of our walk with Christ all of the time and become dull of hearing! How **valuable** is it to have the **opportunity to live with God**, our creator, in a new world that He is preparing for you? How **valuable** is it to **be in His glory forever and never have to face sin ever again?** Is there **anything** on this earth that even comes close to that value? If God were to offer the opportunity to purchase salvation, outside of Christ, there would not be enough money and valuables in this universe to purchase salvation for even the most moral man living. After all, everything on this earth already belongs to Him, doesn't it?

The problem is that we love our sin. If you want to endure hardship and even persecution, if you want God's blessing on your family and in your personal life, if you want to resist temptation and live a righteous life, then you must seek the "**surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus**" as your Lord and live accordingly.

What A Day That Will Be.