

Hebrews

Chapter 7:1-28

September 10, 1995

- **Hebrews Outline:**

- Chapter 1 Christ is greater than the prophets and the angels.
- Chapter 2 Christ's message is greater than the angel's.
- Chapter 3 Christ is greater than Moses.
- Chapter 4 Christ is greater than Joshua and His rest is superior.
- Chapter 5 Christ's High Priesthood is greater than the Aaronic Priesthood.
- Chapter 6 God's faithfulness to Abraham and his descendants is confirmed by an oath.
- Chapter 7 Christ is a Priest in the order of Melchizedek and Christ is greater than Abraham.

- **Introduction & Review**

Now that the author has completed his sharp rebuke and stern warning against falling away, he returns to his previous argument, that is, the Priesthood of Christ. In this section he moves beyond simply stating that Jesus' priesthood is in the order of Melchizedek, he goes on to provide additional insight into this mysterious Biblical character.

Note in verse 26, the author says that such a High Priest was fitting for us (other translations say ". . . meets our needs. . ."). This means that first, we have a need for a High Priest and secondly, Christ fits that need as no other High Priest could.

- **Exposition**

Hebrews 7:1-28

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, 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.

- Over the centuries, there has been much discussion with regard to the nature of Melchizedek. Some have thought that he was a manifestation of the second person of the Trinity. Others have thought that this was a real Canaanitic priest who served to be a type or shadow of the messianic priesthood. This latter option seems more possible for a number of reasons. First, he is compared to the Son of God (this would be odd), secondly, he is named as the King of a specific city. However, either understanding is defensible and knowing for certain which is true is not absolutely necessary for us to receive the appropriate instruction and encouragement from the verses.
- The author then goes on to compare these two priesthoods. The first similarity is in the name, King of Righteousness. Christ is not just a righteous man as Melchizedek apparently was, Christ is the Lord of Righteousness. Next, Melchizedek was a King of Salem which was probably the forerunner of Jerusalem (City of Peace).

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.

- It is very noteworthy to see that the concept of the tithe was established prior to the Mosaic law which required the giving of the tithe to the Levitical priests. This ordinance along with circumcision and sacrifices was incorporated into the Mosaic code. We also see that tithing remains after the Mosaic code has been set aside. In general, as long as there is work to be done (the advancement of the Kingdom of God) the tithe will remain.

- The primary purpose of this section of his instruction is to say that Melchizedek is greater than Abraham—in the next section he goes on to say that Christ is like Melchizedek. The recipients of the letter would have been very familiar with laws concerning tithing and the Levites. It is significant that the author is here saying that in effect Levi paid a tithe to Melchizedek because it elevates the Melchizedekan priesthood over the Levitical.

11 Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? 12 For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. 13 For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar.

- If it has been a while since you've read Genesis, verses like this will be difficult to piece together. The Aaronic priesthood was in essence the same thing as the Levitical priesthood. The primary point of this section is to say that if the Levitical (or Aaronic) priesthood was the priesthood that God chose to bring salvation to the world then why did David prophesy, hundreds of years after the Levitical priesthood was established, that the Messiah would be a priest in the order of Melchizedek in Psalm 110?

14 For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. 15 And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest 16 who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. 17 For He testifies: "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek." 18 For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, 19 for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

- Saul, the original King of Israel was of the tribe of Benjamin. David then succeeded Saul and was of the tribe of Judah. God promised David that He would establish David's throne forever and that one of his descendants would sit on the throne at all times. We know that Christ was of this kingly tribe and that Moses said nothing of a priesthood coming out of Judah.
- The point of these verses is to say that Christ's priesthood was not established by the commandment of lineage but was established because of the power of His eternal life. Jesus was declared to be the Son of God by His resurrection. We also now learn that His priesthood was established in this resurrection because Christ's eternal life was made manifest at the resurrection as well. (cf. 5:5)
- We learn that the Levitical priesthood was weak, unprofitable because the law could not make anyone perfect. So then why was it given? It was given to be picture of the real priesthood that was to come. The better hope by which we actually draw near to God is the Melchizedek priesthood.

20 And inasmuch as He was not made priest without an oath 21 (for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: "The LORD has sworn And will not relent, 'You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek'"), 22 by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant. 23 Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. 24 But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. 25 Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

- Here we are taught about a second oath of God. The first was that God made an oath to Abraham that his descendants would be innumerable and that the world would be blessed through him. Here God has given another oath when David says in Psalm 110, "The Lord has sworn and will not relent. . .".
- Christ is the manifestation of God's faithfulness to provide a better covenant. The first was not able to actually make men good it only pointed out their sinfulness and pointed them to grace (for those who combined it with faith). Under the new covenant, which the old pictured, God does spiritually make us new creations. We are made able to serve God in righteousness and are given the Spirit of God permanently as a deposit guaranteeing our final redemption and glory.
- Because Christ lives forever, his priesthood is unchangeable and He is able to save completely those who come to God.

26 For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; 27 who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. 28 For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever. (NKJV)

- The Aaronic priesthood did not supersede the Melchizedekan priesthood because the oath came many years after the law came. God has provided a priest that is perfect and is able to meet our needs. We have Christ as a priest who intercedes on our behalf perfectly. His priestly sacrifice was offered once as opposed to the Levitical priesthood which had to offer the sacrifices over and over. The law established the priesthood which would stand as a picture of the priesthood to come which was established by an oath. This whole chapter is to solidify in the mind of the recipients that the old sacrificial system was inferior to the system established in Christ.