

## A PRIEST AFTER THE ORDER OF MELCHISEDEK

### The Melchisedek Priesthood Introduced

1. In **Hebrews 5**, Paul introduces the Aaronic priesthood as a type of the priesthood of Christ; but then halfway through the chapter, Paul introduces another historical figure to typify the priesthood of Christ—Melchisedek;
  - a. **Heb 5:6, 10**—thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedek
  
2. Why introduce a second type for the priesthood of Christ?
  - a. There are certain aspects of the priesthood of Christ that cannot be represented by the priesthood of Aaron, but only by Melchisedek:
    - i. **Heb 7:1-2**--Jesus is both **priest** and **king**, as was Melchisedek, but not Aaron
    - ii. **Heb 7:3**—the pre-existence of Jesus cannot be typified by Aaron, but is typified by Melchisedek;
      - **“Without father, without mother”** doesn’t mean he had no parents; it could simply mean that his genealogy is unknown;
      - **“no beginning of days and no end of life”** could simply mean that his birth and death are not known
      - **“made like unto the Son of God”** shows that He is not the Son of God, but made like Him
    - iii. Jesus was made High Priest even though His genealogy did not trace back to Levi; Melchisedek was high priest even though his genealogy was unknown;
    - iv. **Heb 7:16**--Jesus’ continuing priesthood could not be typified by Aaron because he died; Melchisedek’s priesthood, like that of Jesus was based on the power of an endless life,
  - b. Because the greatness, the power and the effectiveness of the priesthood of Christ cannot find representation in the priesthood Aaron, only in that of Melchisedek:
    - i. **Heb 6:19-20**—the hope of receiving the fulfilment of the new covenant promises is not anchored on the high priestly ministration of Aaron, but on the high priestly work of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary after the order of Melchisedek;
  
3. In **Hebrews 7**, Paul expounds on the greatness of Melchisedek compared to Aaron and the Levitical priests and uses him to typify the powerful priesthood of Jesus Christ;

### Disclaimer

4. This study is not to establish the identify of Melchisedek; it is not to establish whether he a supernatural being (the Holy Spirit, an angel, or the pre-incarnate Christ) or merely a historical figure of unknown origin;

5. After all, the bible's account of the Melchisedek is very sketchy; he is mentioned only in **Gen 14:18-20** and **Ps 110:4** so there is no point in building a theology on Melchisedek based on meager information;
6. Our interest in Melchisedek only lies in his relationship with the priesthood of Christ as type

## The Greatness of the Melchisedek Priesthood Explained

7. In **Heb 7: 2-3**, Melchisedek's greatness is described in that he received tithes from the patriarch Abraham
8. in **verses 4-7**—Melchisedek shows his greatness by collecting tithes from the Abraham and blessing him who had the promises.
  - a. Melchisedek's greatness is further accented by the fact that he received tithe from Abraham's descendants even though he was not from the tribe of Levi;
9. In **verses 8-10**—Melchisedek's greatness is presented by the fact that even Levi is said to have paid tithe through Abraham because he was still in his loins when Abraham met Melchisedek;
10. This is how the greatness of Melchisedek becomes typical of the greatness, superiority and power of Christ's high priestly ministry:

## The Levitical Priesthood and Its Limitations

11. In **verses 11-14**, a serious flaw or major limitation of the Levitical priesthood is brought to light, necessitating the need to change it with a better one:
  - a. That priesthood could not bring perfection to the people even though the law had been given them under the dispensation of such priests
12. If there is anything **Heb 7:11** teaches us, it is this:
  - a. that sinless (character) perfection is possible;
  - b. that it is the work of the priest to bring perfection to the people
  - c. that what God requires, He Himself provides through the priesthood
13. **QUESTIONS:** a) What law is being referred to in **Heb 7:11**? The moral law or the ceremonial law? b) Why could perfection not be attained through the Levitical priesthood in spite of the giving of this law under their dispensation?

## The Ceremonial Law and Its Weaknesses

14. This law cannot refer to the moral Law because it is described as holy, just and good (**Rom 7:12**); the moral law is spiritual (**Rom 7:14**);

15. To answer the first question, the relationship between the moral law and the ceremonial law needs to be understood
- a. The **moral law** functioned to point out sin; sin is the transgression of the law (**1 John 3:4**)
  - b. The **ceremonial law** was a set of various provisions that were designed to address the sin problem; the ceremonial law provided for a priesthood and the offering of sacrifices in the sanctuary in order to address the sin problem; the ceremonial law prefigured the redemptive work of Jesus through the gospel;
16. The law Paul talks about in **Heb 7:11** is clearly the ceremonial law
- a. It is the law by which the sons of Levi are empowered to collect tithes from their brethren (**Heb 7:5**)
  - b. It is the same law that appoints men with (moral) infirmities as high priests (**Heb 7:28**)
  - c. This law was the system upon which the entire Jewish economy was built on; it was designed to solve the sin problem, but by its very nature, was weak and unprofitable and therefore could not bring perfection to the people
    - i. The priests themselves were weak and sinful (**Heb 7:28; Heb 5:2-3**)
    - ii. The blood of animal sacrifices could never take away sin (**Heb 10:11**)
    - iii. The service done in the sanctuary could not make the worshippers perfect (**Heb 9:9**)
17. This law had weaknesses
- a. **Heb 7:18**—it was weak and unprofitable and needed to be disannulled
  - b. **Heb 7:19**—this law made nothing perfect and consequently, was needing to be disannulled:
18. Perhaps the most serious limitation or weakness of the ceremonial law was the fact that it only dealt with sins of ignorance and a very limited number of willful sins (**Lev 5-6**);
- a. **Sins of ignorance (Lev 4:1, 13, 17)** --“ If a soul shall sin through ignorance against any of the commandments of the LORD concerning things which ought not to be done. . .”
  - b. **Limited number of willful violations (Leviticus 5 and 6)**
    - i. Failure to report a violation of the moral law (**Lev 5:1**)
    - ii. Deliberately lying and deceiving one’s neighbor (**Lev 6:2**)
    - iii. Keeping something that was lost and not returning it to the owner; keeping something that belongs to his neighbor (**Lev 6:3-4**)
19. In general, the more serious violations of the moral law could not be atoned for by blood sacrifice; perpetrators atoned for these sins with their own blood; grosser sins and willful sins could not be atoned for through the offering of sacrifice in the temple
- a. **Murder could not be atoned for under the law of Moses—(Lev 24:17)**
    - i. David would have been stoned to death for the murder of Uriah
  - b. **Adultery could not be atoned for by sacrifice, but punished by stoning (Lev 20:10)**
    - i. David and Bathsheba would have been stoned to death for the sin of adultery; David knew sacrifices could not atone for his sin (**Ps 51:16-17**)

- ii. Mary Magdalene would have been stoned to death had Jesus not intervened (**John 8:1-8**)
- c. **Blasphemy** could not be atoned for under the law of Moses (**Lev 24:15-16**)
  - i. Jesus almost stoned to death (twice) by the congregation for the accusation of the sin of blasphemy (**John 8:58-59**)
- d. **Idolatry** was punishable by death (**Deut 13:6-11**)
- e. **Homosexuality** was punished with death (**Lev 20:13**)
- f. **Bestiality** could not be atoned for by sacrifice (**Lev 20:15; Exo 20:19**)
- g. **Incest** (**Lev 18**)
- h. **witchcraft** (**Lev 20:27**)

20. **Acts 13:38-39**—under the new Covenant, Jesus justifies sinners which the law of Moses could not be justified! Where would many of us be today, if there was no change in the priesthood? Where would many of us be today if the better hope had not been brought in (**Heb 7:18-19**)?
21. **Gal 3:19**--If the ceremonial had weakness, then why even have it? What is the purpose of the (ceremonial law)? It served a very definite purpose
- a. It taught men that sin meant death of a sacrifice; it taught men that when they sinned, a substitute had to die; that they were the reason the substitute died because they slew it themselves
  - b. It also taught men that even sins of ignorance are serious
  - c. More importantly, it pointed to something better, a better hope

## Christ's Priesthood Introduced

22. In **verses 15-17**—Christ's priesthood is introduced; it is similar to that of Melchisedek because it is not based on physical connection with Levi (**Deut 18:1**), but rather based on the power of an endless life;
- a. He ever liveth to make intercession and as such is able to save to the uttermost. . .
23. For this reason, a better priesthood with better sacrifices and ministering in a better tabernacle had to be brought in, to accomplish what the ceremonial law with its human priests and animal sacrifices could not accomplish—that is, bring perfection to the people;
- a. The Levitical order of things was not powerful enough to bring full cleansing from sin
  - b. The system only provided for the purifying of the flesh, but not the mind or the conscience (**Heb 9:13**)
  - c. The benefit derived was incomplete as there was still memory of sin (**Heb 10:1-2**)
  - d. The system only dealt with sins of ignorance and a few willful sins
24. The book of Hebrews is a book of better things:
- a. Better testament (**Heb 7:22**)
  - b. Better covenant based on better promises (**Heb 8:6**)

- c. Better sacrifices (**Heb 9:23**)
  - d. Better priesthood (**Heb 7**)
  - e. More perfect tabernacle (**Heb 9:11**)
  - f. Better hope (**Heb 7:19**)
25. In **verse 19**—the ceremonial law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a “**better hope**” does
- a. The better hope is a reference to the priesthood of Christ after the order of Melchisedek (**Heb 6:19-20**);
  - b. The hope of obtaining righteousness (**Gal 5:5**), even as God is righteous, is wrapped up in the powerful priesthood of Jesus Christ in the heavenly sanctuary
  - c. Not with the blood of bulls and goats, but with His own blood He obtains rich spiritual gift and benefits for His people
26. **Verse 20-22**—
- a. “**Not without an oath**”—the priesthood of Jesus is better because it is backed up by an oath of God;
  - b. “**a priest forever. . .**”—Not in the sense that Jesus will be priest throughout eternity offering gifts and sacrifices for sin (**Heb 5:1; Heb 8:3**); meaning Christ’s priesthood is never passed on to another, or never to be superseded by another, as in the case of the Levitical priests
  - c. this priesthood makes Jesus the surety and mediator of a better covenant
27. **Verse 23-25**—
- a. Because Jesus lives forever, He is able to continually make intercession and save to the uttermost those who come to Him
  - b. The ministration of human priests kept being interrupted because of death

## More Contrast Between the Priesthood of Levi and that of Jesus

28. **Verses 26-27**—such a high priest assumed human nature:
- a. Who lives continually
  - b. Appointed to the priesthood by an oath of God and by the power of an indestructible life
  - c. Exalted above the heavens; seated at the right hand of God
  - d. Given a name better than the angels
  - e. Crowned with glory and honor
  - f. needed to offer sacrifices for his own sin, as he did not sin
  - g. offered Himself only once, in contrast to the Levitical priests who needed to offer sacrifices for sin many times
29. **Verse 28**—final contrast:
- a. The law appointed men to the priesthood who had moral or character deformities
  - b. But the oath of God appointed the Son Jesus who was perfect forever more

## Conclusion

30. Even if the whole Jewish economy only provided an incomplete salvation, it pointed to something better—the hope of perfect righteousness, a hope which is anchored on the ministration within the veil where Jesus is High Priest according to the order of Melchisedek (**Heb 6:19-20**)
  
31. There is a need to focus one’s whole attention to the work going on in the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary, if he is to benefit from the work going on there—perfection according to the conscience so that there is no more memory of sin!
  
32. This is still future, to be realized. . .
  - a. during the closing scenes of the great day of atonement (**PK 587**)
  - b. “when the decree goes forth and the stamp is impressed, their characters will remain spotless (**5T 216**)
  
33. In the meantime, our great high priest not only offers forgiving grace now but empowering grace for holy living:

There I beheld Jesus, a great High Priest, standing before the Father. On the hem of His garment was a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate. Those who rose up with Jesus would send up their faith to Him in the holiest, and pray, “My Father, give us Thy Spirit.” Then Jesus would breathe upon them the **Holy Ghost**. In that breath was **light, power, and much love, joy, and peace. EW 55.**