

# Hebrews 07 - The Melchizedekian Priesthood; The Levitical Priesthood and the Priesthood of Jesus

## I. Doctrinal Section of the Letter to the Hebrews (Heb 1:1—10:18)

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## Hebrews 7

#### (D) The superiority of the Melchizedekian priesthood to the Aaronic priesthood (7:1-28)

##### (a) Description of Melchizedek (7:1-3)

**1** 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,

**1** 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,

**1** Now this man Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of the Most High God, met Abraham and blessed him when he was returning from defeating the kings.

**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;

- "...king...priest" - a foreign concept to the Jewish mind: "kings" come from the tribe of Judah, and "priests" come from the tribe of Levi

— There are numerous times in the OT when a king tried to perform the duties of a priest (offerings, etc.), and bad things always happened (Korah, Num 16; Saul, 1 Sam 13:8-14; Uzziah, 2 Chr 26:16-21)

- Melchizedek was a prototype or forerunner of Jesus in two respects:

1. He was both a "king" and a "priest"

2. He was characterized by "righteousness" and "peace" (Cf. 12:10-11; Ps 85:10; Is 32:17; Rom 5:1; James 3:17-18)

2 to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth 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.

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.

2 Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything. In the first place, his name means "king of righteousness," and then he is also king of Salem, that is, "king of peace."

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;

- Abraham gave Him tithes!

— Note the order: King of Righteousness; then King of Peace (Is 9:6-7). Righteousness is always first, then follows peace (vs. Adoni-zedek in Joshua 10:1).

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.

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.

3 He has no father, mother, or genealogy, no birth date recorded for him, nor a date of death. Like the Son of God, he continues to be a priest forever.

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.

- "Without Father, without mother" - no genealogy recorded

— It is not saying he didn't have parents, it is saying that he had no *known* parents and no *known* birth or death. He had no predecessor and he had no successor in the Scriptural record. However, this does not mean that he was anything but a human being.

— What was true of Melchizedek as a matter of record was true of Christ in a fuller and more literal sense. So the silence of Scripture points to an important theological truth...it is not that Melchizedek sets the pattern and Jesus follows it. Rather, the record about Melchizedek is arranged so that it brings out certain truths which apply more fully to Jesus than they do to Melchizedek.

— With Melchizedek, these truths are simply a matter of record, but with Jesus they are historically true and also have significant spiritual implications

- In contrast with Melchizedek's lack of genealogy, the Aaronic priesthood depended entirely on genealogy. Unless a man could trace his genealogy back to Aaron, he could not

serve as a priest (Cf. Ezra 2:61-63; Neh 7:63-65). Qualification had nothing to do with him personally; it was solely based on ancestry. Jesus' qualifications, on the other hand, were completely personal.

### Six Similarities

1. Melchizedek was both a priest and a king (Heb 7:1)
  - He was the *King of Salem*, which is also known as Jerusalem (Ps 76:2)
  - The last part of his name, *zedek*, was a Jebusite dynastic name
    - Many years later, when Joshua came into the Land, he fought against the King of Jerusalem whose name was *Adoni-zedek* (Josh 10:1)
    - He was also the *Priest of God Most High*; therefore, he was both king and priest
    - His name and title characterized two things about his reign:
      - He ruled in *righteousness*, which is what his name means
      - He ruled in *peace*, which is what *Salem* means
    - These two characteristics are also mentioned of the future reign of the Messiah (Is 9:6-7)
2. The Melchizedekian Priesthood issued in blessing in that Melchizedek blessed Abraham (Heb 7:1)
  - How the Messiah's priesthood issues in blessing is revealed later in this chapter
3. The giving of tithes was a recognition of superiority (Heb 7:2)
  - Abraham, by tithing to Melchizedek, was recognizing Melchizedek's positional superiority
    - It is at this point that the writer defines the meaning of *Melchizedek* and the meaning of *Salem*
    - *Melchizedek* means the *King of righteousness*, and *Salem* means *peace*
    - The fact that Jesus functions as a Melchizedekian priest shows his superiority over any other priesthood
4. Melchizedek was an independent high priest *as is Jesus* (Heb 7:3)
  - Melchizedek's priesthood was individual in that, when he appeared on the scene, the text states only that he was the priest of the Most High God
    - There is no mention of a mother, no mention of a father, and no mention of his genealogy.
    - This does not mean that he did not have a mother, a father, or a genealogical record. Insofar as the Melchizedekian Order of Priesthood was concerned, ancestry was not important in establishing his claim to priesthood.
  - The appointment to Melchizedek's Priesthood was independent of human relations

- Not true of the Aaronic Order (the Levitical Order): unless a person could prove he was a descendent of Aaron, he was disqualified from the priesthood (Num 16-17)
  - When the Jews returned from the Babylonian Captivity, many claimed the office of priesthood, but some could not prove they were direct descendants of Aaron and were disqualified (Ezra 2:61-63; Neh 7:63-65)
  - Genealogy was not important for the Melchizedekian Priesthood. There is no record of the birth or the death of Melchizedek. Both events occurred, but there is no record of them.
5. The Melchizedekian Priesthood was timeless (Heb 7:3)
- The Levitical priest could only serve from age 25 to age 50 (Num 8:24-25)
    - The Levitical Priesthood had a definite beginning and a definite end
    - There is no mention of the beginning or the end of his priesthood
    - There is no record of Melchizedek being succeeded by another priest in his office
    - Thus Melchizedek was *made like unto the Son of God*
    - As far as the biblical record is concerned, his priesthood was timeless; there is no record of it ending
6. The Melchizedekian Priesthood was all inclusive in that it ministered to all (Heb 7:3)
- The Levitical Priesthood had a limited ministry, only to the nation of Israel
    - The Melchizedekian Priesthood was universal, not national. *Jesus also has a universal priesthood*

### **Pre-incarnate Christ?**

1. In this text he does *not* use an adjective that would describe Melchizedek in his being and essence to be like the Son of God; instead, he uses a participle, meaning that Jesus was similar to Melchizedek only in the likeness of the Biblical statement. The word for being made, *aphomoioo*, means to cause a model to pass off into an image or shape like it; to express itself in it, to copy; to produce a facsimile—found only here in the Greek NT.
2. He states that Melchizedek was *like* the Son of God; it does not say that he “was” the Son of God in the OT.
3. The second passage where he is mentioned (Ps 110:4) distinguishes Melchizedek from the Messiah.
4. One of the prerequisites for priesthood was that the priest had to be human (Heb 5:1). Jesus did not become a man until the Incarnation when He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary. Before that time, Jesus appeared in the form of a man, but He was not an actual man.

5. Another reason why Melchizedek could not have been a theophany is that theophanies appeared and disappeared; they held no long-term office. The Melchizedek of Gen 14 was a king of the city-state of Jerusalem, which required a position and a permanent residency. Theophanies never held a position; they were always short and temporary ad hoc manifestations.

(b) Melchizedek is superior to Aaron (7:4-10)

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

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

**4** Just look at how great this man was! Even Abraham—the patriarch himself—gave him a tenth of what he had captured!

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

- "...observe" - to have a constant contemplation with insight and discernment

— The readers needed to recognize certain historical facts, then deduce certain theological conclusions from them

- This and the following verses explain further how Melchizedek was superior to Abraham, the ancestor of Levi, the head of the priestly tribe under the Old (Mosaic) Covenant.

- The author says more about three of the facts mentioned above: Melchizedek received tithes from Abraham, he blessed Abraham, and he lived longer than Abraham. The purpose was to show "how great" Melchizedek was compared to the venerated patriarch Abraham.

— In this verse, the author stresses that Melchizedek accepted tithes from Abram. This shows the positional dignity of Melchizedek.

— The fact that Abraham was a patriarch already put him in a position of superiority. Yet, even as a Patriarch, Abraham recognized the superiority of Melchizedek and paid him a tithe.

- This is demonstrated that there were priesthoods greater than Aaron's before Aaron even existed. The writer is trying to get the Jewish mind to recognize that there are boundaries and limitations to Judaism (other priesthoods):

- Jacob's tithes at Bethel? (Gen 28:22)
- Jethro, priest of Midian? (Gen 18:1)

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

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.

5 The descendants of Levi who accept the priesthood have a commandment in the Law to collect a tenth from the people, that is, from their own brothers, even though they are also descendants of Abraham.

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:

- The descendants of Abraham paid tithes to their priests (sons of Levi), but Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek

- The writer was contrasting Aaron and Melchizedek more than Abraham and Melchizedek. The point is that the one to whom Abraham paid tithes (Melchizedek) was superior to the one to whom Abraham's descendants paid tithes (Levitical priests).

- The Levitical priesthood received tithes from their brothers; Melchizedek received tithes from a Patriarch

- In the area of who collects tithes from whom, Melchizedek is superior to Aaron and Levi

Some teach that believers must tithe today and they base it on this text. The reasoning is that Abraham paid tithes, which was before the Law; therefore, it shows that tithing was a practice before the Law, thus tithing still applies today (after the Law). However, that reasoning fails in two areas: First, Abraham's tithe to Melchizedek was a one-time event; he did not give one regularly. Second, Abraham did not give these tithes from his income but from the spoils of war. He conquered a group of kings who had captured his nephew, Lot. Abraham rescued Lot and other citizens of Sodom, gathered all the spoils, and from these spoils of war, he gave a tenth to Melchizedek. Thus, Abraham's payment of a tithe is not a basis for teaching tithing today.

6 But the one whose genealogy is not traced from them collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises.

6 But the one whose genealogy is not traced from them collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises.

6 But this man, whose descent is not traced from them, collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the man who had received the promises.

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

- Melchizedek's genealogy was not "from them"—he had no racial connection to the Levites—he received tithes from Abraham, then blessed him

7 But without any dispute the lesser *person* is blessed by the greater.  
7 But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater.  
7 It is beyond dispute that the less important person is blessed by the more important person.  
7 And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.  
- Abraham had the promises, yet Melchizedek blessed him. That makes Abraham subordinate to Melchizedek, as the lesser always gives tithes to the greater, who in turn blesses the lesser.

8 In this case **mortal men** receive tithes, but in that case one *receives them*, of whom it is witnessed that **he lives on**.

8 In this case mortal men receive tithes, but in that case one *receives them*, of whom it is witnessed that he lives on.

8 Mortal men collect tithes, but we are informed by Scripture that Melchizedek keeps on living.

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

- "...mortal men" - refers to Levi; he died and so did his descendants who also served in that office

— This is why provision for succession after death was made under the Law

- "...he lives on" - refers to Melchizedek, who "lived on" as far as the specific revelation of Scripture is concerned

— There is no record of his death or record of someone succeeding him; this implies that the Melchizedekian priesthood is eternal

9 And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, has paid tithes,

9 And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes,

9 One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham,

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

- In a sense, Levi (a descendant of Abraham) paid tithes to Melchizedek through Abraham

— The point is that if the fathers like Abraham and Levi were obliged to recognize the superiority of the Melchizedekian Priesthood, the sons should also recognize this superiority

10 for he was still in the loins of his **forefather** when Melchizedek met him.

10 for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

10 because Levi was still inside his ancestor when Melchizedek met him.

10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchizedek met him.

- In a sense, Levi himself paid tithes to Melchizedek since he was "in the loins" of Abraham  
- "...forefather" - may be grandfather, or even great grandfather as there is no exact word for them. The use of "father" does not necessarily mean a direct son.

— Levi was subordinate to Abraham because he was still in his loins, genealogically speaking

#### (c) Weaknesses of the Levitical priesthood (7:11-19)

**11** So if **perfection** was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need *was there* for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron?

**11** Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need *was there* for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron?

**11** Now if perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood—for on this basis the people received the Law—what further need would there be to speak of appointing another kind of priest according to the order of Melchizedek, not one according to the order of Aaron?

**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 Melchizedek, and not be called after the order of Aaron?

- "...perfection" - maturity

- The author's point is that the Levitical Priesthood could not perfect (bring maturity to) the worshiper, thus it had to be superseded by something else

— If perfection were possible by the Levitical Priesthood, what further need should there be for a priest after the order of Melchizedek?

— God promised in Ps 110:4 that the coming Messiah would be a priest after the order of Melchizedek, thus He intended to terminate and replace the Levitical priesthood because it was inadequate

— If the Levitical priesthood was adequate, the Messiah would have functioned as a Levitical priest

### **Superseded Priesthood**

This is a delicate subject as he runs the risk of offending the Jewish believers. He is going to highlight and point out that the Levitical Priesthood was imperfect, incomplete, temporary, and destined to be superseded. It *never* gave redemption and acceptance before God to the people. And that is exactly what Jesus Christ did: He not only fulfilled but He also superseded the Levitical Priesthood.



12 For when the priesthood is **changed**, of necessity there takes place a change of law also.

12 For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also.

12 When a change in the priesthood takes place, there must also be a change in the Law.

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

- "...changed" - the priesthood was such a major part of the Mosaic Covenant that this predicted change (Cf. Ps 110:4) in the priesthood signaled a change in the whole Covenant ("law")

— To do away with the Levitical Priesthood required the doing away with the Law because there was an inseparable connection between the Levitical Priesthood and the Mosaic Law

— This verse is one of the clearest statements in the NT indicating that God terminated the Mosaic Covenant (Law) (Cf. Rom 10:4). Thus, Christians are not under it (Rom 6:14-15; Gal 3:24-25; 5:1; 6:2; 2 Cor 3:7-11).

— Thus, the Law is not what God has given to regulate the lives of Christians

If Christ is our high priest today, there has to be a change in the Law since He could not qualify as a priest under the Levitical arrangement (being of the tribe of Judah). If the Law has not been done away with, neither has the Levitical priesthood. So if Christ is our High Priest, we cannot be under the Law.

The problem with the old system (Mosaic Covenant/Law) was two-fold: First, all priests and people alike were breakers of the law, and the fact that the priests of the levitical order were themselves sinners incapacitated them from offering up an adequate and perfect sacrifice; indeed they had first to offer sacrifice for their own sins before presenting an offering for the sins of the people (5:3; 7:27). Second, no unwilling and uncomprehending animal, such as was offered under the old system, was competent to serve as a true substitute for the human sinner.

13 For **the one about whom these things are said** belongs to **another tribe**, from which no one has officiated at the altar.

13 For the one concerning whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar.

13 For the person we are talking about belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar.

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

- "...the one about whom these things are said" - refers to Jesus Christ

- "...another tribe" - refers to Judah

— The author reminded the readers that Ps 110:4 spoke of a priest from David's line. This implies that the Coming Priest (Jesus) will not be from the Aaronic or Levitical Order.

— According to the Mosaic Law, only a member of the Tribe of Levi could handle the functions of the Altar. No one from the Tribe of Judah could qualify under the Law.

14 For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses said nothing concerning priests.

14 For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests.

14 Furthermore, it is obvious that our Lord was a descendant of Judah, and Moses said nothing about priests coming from that tribe.

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

- Because the Law forbid those outside the Tribe of Levi from handling priestly functions, Jesus had to be of a different priestly order than the Levitical Order

- Aaronic priesthood required (Num 16-17); Levi was the only tribe that represented the people before the Altar of God.

— The priests served from 25 to 55 years of age (Num 8:24-25). Many were disqualified for lack of genealogical proof (Ezra 2:61-63; Neh 7:63-65).

15 And this is clearer still, if **another** priest arises according to the **likeness** of Melchizedek,

15 And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek,

15 This point is even more obvious in that another priest who is like Melchizedek has appeared

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

- "...another" - *heteros*, another of a different kind; as opposed to *allos*, another of the same kind

— The author is demonstrating that if there were to be another priest after the Order of Melchizedek, it would show that the old Levitical Priesthood was temporary: this is *evident* by what is spelled out in the preceding verses.

- "...likeness" - indicates a model, an analogy, a type

— He is saying that after the model of Melchizedek, there arises *another* priest

16 who has become *a priest* not on the **basis of a law of physical requirement**, but according to the power of an **indestructible life**.

16 who has become *such* not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life.

16 who was appointed to be a priest, not on the basis of a genealogical registry, but rather on the power of an indestructible life.

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

- "...basis of a law of physical requirement" - his way of speaking of the Law that God gave after the flesh, which ordained the Levitical Priesthood and its succession by genealogy

— The old system was based on the Law, and was outward; the new system is based upon inward power, and is inward

— The old system meant that a man was a priest only because his father was a priest; this resulted in some very unholy priests in Jewish history

- "...indestructible life" - Jesus did not become a priest because He met a "physical requirement" (born into the priestly tribe). He became a permanent high priest after His ascension because He would never die again.

Every regulation that governed the old priesthood had to do with a priest's physical body. Every item in the ceremony is a physical thing, affecting the priest's body. Christ's priesthood does not depend on physical things, but on His character, His personality, His being, what He was in Himself. This was the revolution: it is no longer outward ceremonies and observances that make a priest...it is inward worth.

17 For it is attested *of Him*, "YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK."

17 For it is attested *of Him*, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."

17 For it is declared about him, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

17 For he testifieth, *Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek*.

- Quoted from Ps 110:4, emphasizing two things:

1. The eternality of this priesthood: *You are a priest for ever*

2. The character of this New Priesthood: *After the order of Melchizedek*

— This was a prophecy given under the Mosaic Law

18 For, on the one hand, there is *the nullification* of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness

18 For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness

18 Indeed, because it was weak and ineffective, the former commandment has been annulled,

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

- Summary of the argument: God has superseded the Levitical priesthood and the Mosaic Covenant (Law). He has replaced the old system ("commandment") with a new, "better" system that can do what the old one could not: namely, bring us into intimate relationship with God.

- "...nullification" - *athetesis*, "to abolish"; a much stronger term than *metathesis*, "alteration"

— The same Greek word is used in 9:26 where he talks about putting away sin. Just as His death put away sin, in the same way, His death put away the Law.

- His death put away the Law for two reasons:

1. Weakness: it could not impart strength nor justification
2. Unprofitableness: it could not impart life

— Thus, the priesthood that is after the law can only be temporary

This is a clear statement that the Law has been put away. This was essential for Jesus to function in His New Priesthood: If the Law were still in effect, He could not be priest; He could be priest only because the Law has been put away. He is again making the point that the Law itself didn't perfect anything; it simply shows us our need for a Savior.

19 (for **the Law made nothing perfect**); on the other hand, *there is the* introduction of a **better hope**, through which we come near to God.

19 (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

19 since the Law made nothing perfect, and a better hope is presented, by which we approach God.

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

- "...the Law made nothing perfect" - this is why there was a need for a New Priesthood, with a new Priest: the Law could not bring one to spiritual maturity, it could only point to the One who could perfect (Cf. Gal 3:23-25).

- "...better hope" - the assurance that this special, eternal and intimate relationship is now possible for us to experience, thanks to our Great High Priest

- The Law of Moses is a terrifying picture of a God that requires righteousness; it does not draw you to ("near to") a holy God
- Only God can fulfill the Law and provide you with righteousness which allows you to be in the presence of a Holy God
- Jesus "draws us near unto God." Through His love we draw near, and by His righteousness we can be near God (Cf. 4:14-16).

The result of the new Priest's ministry is access; because of His Priesthood, they have access to God's presence. Therefore, through this Priesthood, one can draw near to God. In 4:14-16, they were encouraged to draw near and approach the throne of grace boldly. The reason this is possible is because of this Priesthood.

(d) Melchizedekian priesthood based upon a better covenant (7:20-22)

20 And to the extent that *it was* not without an oath

20 And inasmuch as *it was* not without an oath

20 Now none of this happened without an oath. Others became priests without any oath,

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

21 (for they indeed became priests without an **oath**, but He with an oath through the One who said to Him, "THE LORD HAS SWORN AND WILL NOT CHANGE HIS MIND, 'YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER'");

21 (for they indeed became priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One who said to Him, "The Lord has sworn And will not change His mind, 'You are a priest forever'");

21 but Jesus became a priest with an oath when God told him, "The Lord has taken an oath and will not change his mind. You are a priest forever."

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 Melchizedek:)

- "...oath" - the Levitical priesthood was *not* set up with an oath: it was genealogical; this was another indication of its inferiority. But the Melchizedek Priesthood was unique in that it was created by divine oath (Ps 110:4).

— The things that God establishes by an oath become eternal, permanent, and unchangeable

22 by the same extent Jesus also has become the **guarantee** of a better **covenant**.

22 so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

22 In this way, Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant.

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

- "...guarantee" - like a bondsman, or sponsor, someone who gives himself as security or a guarantee.

— Because God promised on oath to install Jesus permanently as our priest, the author could say that Jesus is the "surety of a better testament [covenant]"

— The One who is the surety or guarantor of this covenant assumes the responsibility that the imposed obligations will indeed be carried out; He will guarantee the fulfillment of the New Covenant.

- "...covenant" - *diatheke*, the first of a total of 17x this word is used in this epistle. This word is used a total of 33x in the entire NT, and half occur in Hebrews alone.

— The author preferred *diatheke* instead of the more common *syntheke*, evidently because *syntheke* suggests an agreement made on relatively equal terms. *Diatheke* has the idea of a more absolute will, such as a "last will and testament."

— The security of this new covenant is Jesus Christ Himself. He ministers in a superior sanctuary, by a better covenant, and built upon better promises (Heb 8-10).

Since the old priesthood was the heart of the Old Covenant, and God terminated both of them, the new priesthood must be connected to a "New Covenant" that is superior to the Old Covenant. Since the new Priest has come, so must the New Covenant have come (Cf. Luke 22:20).

(e) Melchizedekian priesthood based upon resurrection life (7:23-25)

**23** The *former* priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing;

**23** The *former* priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing,

**23** There have been many priests, since each one of them had to stop serving in office when he died.

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

- The Levitical priests had to succeed one another because they kept dying, but Jesus needs no successor

24 Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood **permanently**.

24 but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently.

24 But because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood.

24 But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

- Since they were mortal and died, they had to be continually replaced. This is in contrast to our High Priest who lives forever.
- "...permanently" - *aparabatos*, unalterable, unchangeable, indivisible
- Josephus wrote that there were 83 different high priests between Aaron and the destruction of the temple in 70 AD

25 Therefore He is also able to **save forever those who come to God through Him**, since **He always lives** to make **intercession for them**.

25 Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

25 Therefore, because he always lives to intercede for them, he is able to save completely those who come to God through him.

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.

- "...save forever" - these words are intended to exclude nothing. *There is no condition nor situation which is not included.*

— "forever" - *panteles*, completely, perfectly, utterly; to arrive at a final destination with all these various aspects completed. It means to be saved completely and saved forever.

— The basis for eternal security is that He can save forever because His Priesthood is forever

- "...those who come to God through Him" - here is the condition—that they come unto God by Jesus. He is able to bring them to God by making intercession for them (Rom 5:10; 1 John 1:21). The basis of our eternal security is that He can save forever because His Priesthood is forever.

— "draw near" - "to meet with"

— The picture of the Messiah as our Intercessor is that He appears before God the Father, meeting with Him on a face-to-face basis on our behalf and for our benefit as He pleads our cause (Cf. Rom 8:34; Heb 9:24; See also [Present Ministry of Christ](#) for a list of other priestly duties of the Messiah during this "Present Session."

- "...He always lives" - the fact that Christ will not die and need replacement by another means that He can see His work of delivering His people through to the end

— Thus, He can "save" "completely" in the sense of seeing us through to the realization of our full salvation, or "rest" (inheritance) in God's presence. Our trials and temptations need not separate us from our inheritance since Jesus Christ can continue to support us by providing mercy and grace (4:14-16) all the way to our ultimate reward.

- "...intercession for them" - one of at least 11 things Jesus is doing today, during His Present Session (Cf. Rom 8:34)

— This is one of the works of Christ during His Present Session. See [Present Ministry of Christ](#) for details on what Jesus is doing from heaven today.

(f) Melchizedekian priesthood based upon sinless perfection (7:26-28)

**26** For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, **holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners**, and **exalted above the heavens**;

**26** For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens;

**26** We need such a high priest—one who is holy, innocent, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

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

- In view of His superior ministry, it is only fitting that our High Priest should be a superior Person

— Humanity was in desperate need of a spotless priest, and God provided One

- "...holy" - *hosios*, blamelessness, personal purity in His priestly relationship Godward

- "...innocent" - *akakos*, without guile; He did not practice evil; He was without evil in his thought life. He was innocent and harmless in His relationship to man (Cf. Rom 16:18)

- "...undefiled" - unstained, free from defilement; refers to His sinless and moral purity, in contrast to the Levitical priests who were concerned with ritual purity

- "...separated from sinners" - He is separated from sinners in His present ministry in the Holy of Holies in the Heavenly Tabernacle

- "...exalted above the heavens" - this is how Jesus became separated from sinners; He passed through into the third heaven

27 who has no daily need, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the *sins* of the people, because He did this once for all *time* when He offered up Himself.

27 who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the *sins* of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.

27 He has no need to offer sacrifices every day like high priests do, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he sacrificed himself.

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.

- Old Covenant priests had to offer sacrifices for their own sins before he could offer a sacrifice for the sins of others (Ex 29:38-46; Lev 3:3-12)



- On the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), the high priest would offer a sin offering for expiation for himself, and then another one for the sins of the people (Lev 16:6-10)
- Jesus does not need to offer up periodic sacrifices to atone for sin, either His own or for those of His people. His once-and-for-all sacrifice on the Cross completely satisfied God. No subsequent sacrifices are necessary.
- This thought is further developed in 9:11-14; 10:1-5

While His own death was a priestly act, He was not a priest at the time of His death for it was God the Father who offered Him up (Ps 22:15; Is 53:10). Jesus did not become High Priest until the Ascension, and that is why His priesthood is continuous.

### **Our High Priest**

*Jesus is able to provide for us because at this moment He is at the right hand of the Father making intercession for us.* There were seven pieces of furniture or fixtures in the Tabernacle, but not one place to sit down (10:11-14). The priests in the Tabernacle always stood because they were working.

28 For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, *appoints* a Son, who has been made perfect forever.

28 For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, *appoints* a Son, made perfect forever.

28 For the Law appoints as high priests men who are weak, but the promised oath, which came after the Law, results in a Son who is eternally perfect.

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.

- Jesus is superior because He is "a Son" (*the* Son of God) rather than a mere man because God appointed Him more recently than He appointed the Levitical priests and because God appointed Him with an oath (v21).

### **Superiority of Jesus' High Priesthood**

To summarize, the superiority of Jesus' high priesthood is clear from four facts:

1. Jesus' priesthood did not depend on His ancestors, but on Him alone
2. Jesus lives forever and never dies
3. Jesus is sinless and never needs to offer a sacrifice for His own sins
4. Jesus offered a perfect and adequate sacrifice

In view of the superior order of priesthood that Melchizedek foreshadowed, and that Jesus fulfilled, why would anyone want to go back to the old Aaronic order? The Person of our

high priest is superior. The order of His priesthood is superior. Christ is completely adequate in His Person, and preeminent in His order. We should worship His Person and rely on His intercession in view because of His order.

### **The High Priest**

The High Priests were washed and anointed. The concept of water and the Word are linked up here in a repetitive washing. We are washed in His blood once judicially, but we are washed practically daily, continually, by the water of the Word.

All the details of the priests are symbolic: They were clothed in white garments (righteousness). They made a sin offering and took of the blood to put on the right ear (what they heard), the right thumb (what they did) and the right foot (where they went). They were anointed with sacred oil (Holy Spirit). The oil used was incredibly expensive (Lev 8-9).

### **The Offerings**

However, the Levitical sacrifices did not start with the Law of Moses. We always assume that they did because they were ceremonialized under the Law of Moses in the Torah (Cf. Gen 3:21). When Abraham was told to offer Isaac (Gen 22), this is before Exodus! Even the story of Cain and Abel is really about sacrifices. These animal sacrifices don't really *pay* for sin, they are a model or foreshadowing of Jesus Christ, the only one who could *pay* for sin (Lev 9:15; 6:26; Is 53).

### **Levitical Offerings**

Voluntary – "Sweet Savour" (to God)

- Burnt Offering
- Meal Offering
- Peace Offering

Compulsory – "Non-Sweet Savour" (for us)

- Sin Offering
- Trespass Offering

Burnt Offering: The burnt offering was called "the holocaust" and was totally consumed. This all points to Jesus Christ, where God makes Jesus' soul an offering for sin (Is 53:10-12)

Meal ("Meat") Offering: This was followed by the meat offering (really grain) or oblation, a form of thanksgiving

Peace Offering: The peace offering was really like a banquet of celebration.

Sin & Trespass Offerings: The sin and trespass offerings were specific.

The Passover—perhaps the most interesting offering—which the High Priest did *not* administer

### **Summary**

The Levitical Priests were taken from among men, they were public officials. They gave gifts and sacrifices before the throne. They were not exempt from their own infirmities. They were not self-appointed, they were chosen and approved of by God.

Christ is our High Priest and He is one of exceptional circumstances. He is there as the Son of God, not just as the son of man. He is without sin, unique in that respect, in contrast to the Levitical priest. The eminency of His order (Melchizedek) is higher than that of Levitical order. He has the most solemn form of ordination possible, the Oath of God Himself.

### **The Excellency of His Sacrifice**

Jesus offered Himself, without spot or blemish, as a sacrifice. In every dimension of the priesthood, He is the ultimate expression of the perfection of His administration. He accomplished what others could only hint at. His office is perpetual, it isn't transferable, and it will never expire!